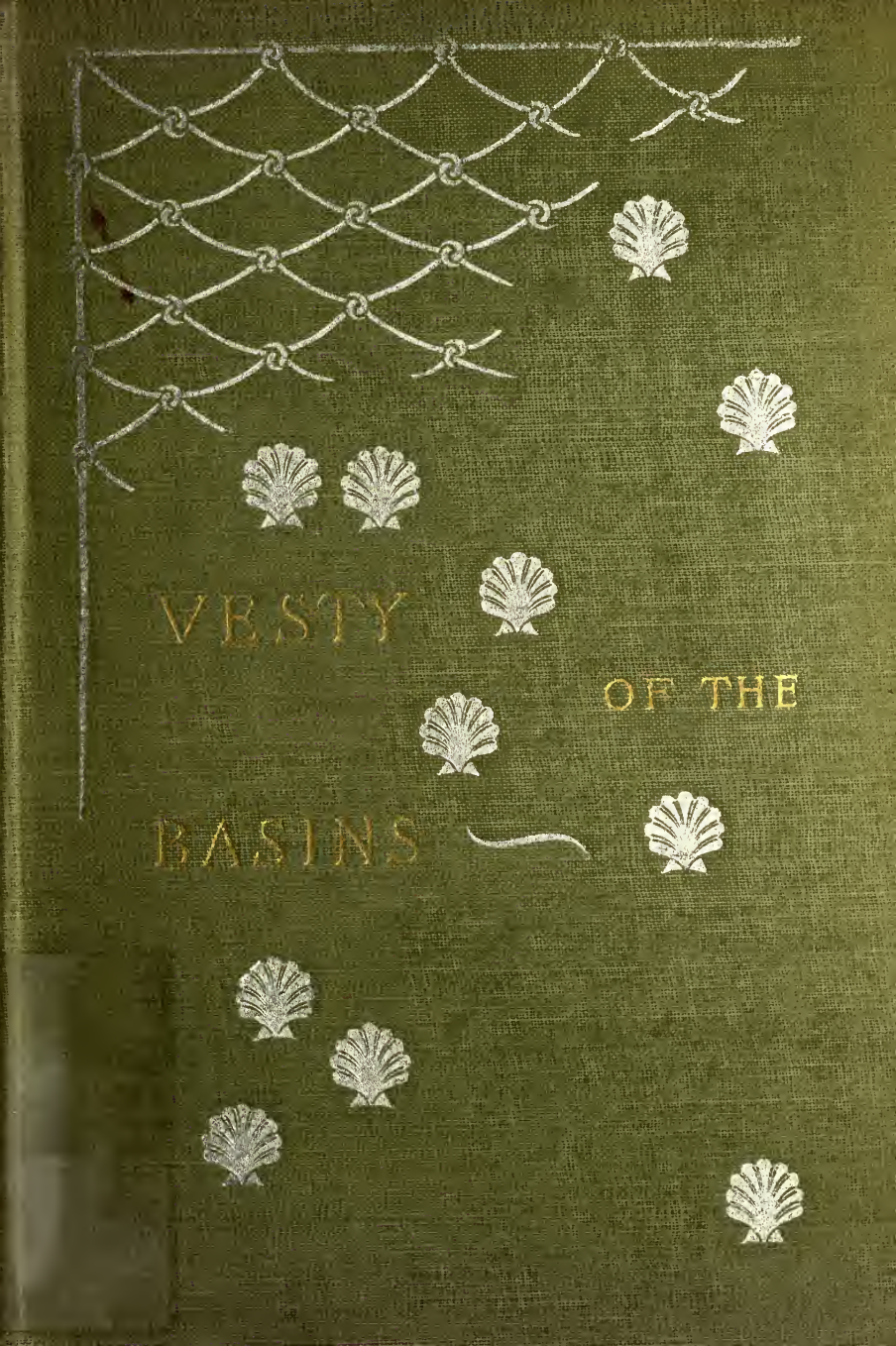
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VESTY OF THE BASINS

A Novel

BY

SARAH P. McLEAN GREENE

AUTHOR OF "CAPE COD FOLKS" ETC.

NEW YORK AND LONDON

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VESTY OF THE BASINS

I

THE MEETIN'

Now is it to be rain or a storm of wind at the Basin?

I love that foam out on the sea; those boulders, black and wet along the shore, they are a rest to me; the clouds chase one another; in this dim north country the wind is cool and strong, though it is now midsummer; at sunset you shall see such color!

From a little, low, storm-beaten building comes the sound of a fog-horn. That is the gift of Melchias Tibbitts, deceased, to the Basin school-house. Yonder is his schooner, the "Martha B. Fuller," long stranded, leaning seaward, down there in the cove.

It is Sunday afternoon; the fog-horn that Melchias Tibbitts gave—it serves as bell; the battered school-house as church; and for Sunday raiment? some little reverent, aspiring compromise of an unwonted white collar, stretched stiff and holy and uncomfortable about the stalwart neck above a blue flannel shirt, or a new pair of rubber boots—the trousers

much tucked in—worn with an air of conscious, deprecating pride.

But the women will be fine. God only knows how! but be sure, in some pitiful, sweet way they will be fine.

There are many panes of glass out of the windows, the panels of the doors are out; so better they can see the clouds pass: it is beautiful.

Oh, naught have I either, nor wisdom, nor fine speech—only a little knowledge of shipwreck out yonder, and mirth, and tears, and love. The windows and panels of my life are no strong plate, polished and glittering to all beholders; they are stained and broken through. Let me come in and sit with ye.

"We should like to open our meetin' with singin'," said Superintendent Skates; "will one of the Pointers lead us in singin'?"

The Pointers were the aristocrats of this region, living twelve miles away at the Point, in the midst of two grocery stores and a millinery establishment; there were two of them here for a Sunday drive and pastime. They were silent.

"I see," said Elder Skates patiently, "that a few of the Crooked Rivers have drove down to-day, too. Will one of the Crooked Rivers lead us in singin'?"

Lower down in the scale than the Pointers were they of Crooked River, but still far above the Basins; those present were not singers, they were silent.

"Then will one of the Capers lead us in singin'?" very meekly and patiently persisted Elder Skates.

Nearer, and of low degree, were they of the Cape, but still above the Basins. They were silent.

"I know," said Elder Skates, his subdued tone buoyant now with an undertone of hope, "that one of the Basins will lead us in singin'!"

For the Basins had reached those cheerful depths where there is no social or artistic status to maintain; so low as to be expected to do, or attempt to do, whatever might be asked of them, even though failure plunged them, if possible, in deeper depths of abasement. There was nothing beneath them except the Artichokes; and it was seldom, very seldom, an Artichoke was present.

But the Basins, though so low, were modest.

"Can't one of the Basins start, 'He will carry you through'?" said the enduring Brother Skates; "where is Vesty?"

"She 's a-helpin' Elvine with her baby," came now a prompt and ready reply: "she said she'd come along for social meetin', after you'd had Sunday-school, ef she could."

"How is Elvine's baby?" spoke up another voice.

"Wal', he 's poored away dreadful, but Aunt Lowize says he 's turned to git along all right now, and when Aunt Lowize gives hopes, it 's good hopes, she 's nachally so spleeny."

"Sure enough. Wal', I've raised six, and nary sick day, 'less it was a cat-bile or some sech little meachin' thing. I tell you there ain't no doctor's

ructions like nine-tenths milk to two-tenths molasses, and sot 'em on the ground, and let 'em root."

At this simple and domestic throwing off of all social reserve, voices hitherto silent began to arise, numerous and cheerful.

"Is there any more rusticators come to board this summer?"

"There 's only four by and large," replied a male voice sadly. "These here liquor laws 't Washin'-ton 's put onto nor'eastern Maine are a-killin' on us for a fash'nable summer resort. When folks finds out 't they've got to go to a doctor and swear 't there 's somethin' the matter with their insides, in order to git a little tod o' whiskey aboard, they turns and p'ints her direc' for Bar Harbor and Saratogy Springs; an' they not only p'ints her, they h'ists double-reef sails and sends her clippin'!"

"Lunette 's got two," came from the other side of the house.

"What do they pay?"

"Five dollars a week."

"Pshaw! what ructions! Three dollars a week had ought to pay the board of the fanciest human creetur 't God ever created yit. But some folks wants the 'arth, and'll take it too, if they can git it."

"Wal', I don' know; they're kind o' meachy, and allas souzlin' theirselves in hot water; it don't cost nothin', but it gives yer house a ridick'lous name. Then they told Lunette they wanted their lobsters br'iled alive. 'Thar,' says she, 'I sot my foot down.

I told 'em I wa'n't goin' to have no half-cooked lobsters hoppin' around in torments over my house. I calk'late to put my lobsters in the pot, and put the cover on and know where they be,' says she."

"I took a rusticator once 't was dietin' for dyspepsy—that 's a state o' the stomick, ye know, kind o' between hay and grass—and if I didn't get tired o' makin' toast and droppin' eggs!"

"I never could see no fun in bein' a rusticator anyway, down there by the sea-wall on a hot day, settin' up agin' a spruce tree admirin' the lan'scape, with ants an' pitch ekally a-meanderin' over ye."

"Lunette's man-boarder there, the husban', he 's editor of a noos-sheet, and gits a thousand dollars a year—'tain't believable, but it 's what they say—an' he thinks he knows it all. He got Fluke to take him out in his boat; he began to direc' Fluke how to do this, an' how to do that, and squallin' and flyin' at him. Fluke sailed back with him and sot him ashore. 'When I take a hen in a boat, I'll take a hen,' says he."

"Did ye hear about Fluke's tradin' cows?"

"No."——

Meanwhile Brother Skates had been standing listening, patient, interested, but now recovered himself, blushing, in his new rubber boots.

"Can't one of the Basins start 'He will carry you through'?" he entreated.

"I'd like to," said one sister, the string of her tongue having been unloosed in secular flights;

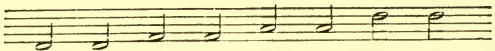
"I've got all the dispersition in the world, Brother Skates, but I don't know the tune."

"It 's better to start her with only jest a good dispersition and no tune to speak of," said Brother Skates with gentle reproof, "than not to start her at all."

Thus encouraged the song burst forth, with tune enough and to spare.

It was this I heard—I, a happy adopted dweller, from the lowest handle-end of the Basin, while driving over through the woods with Captain Pharo Kobbe and his young third wife and children.

"Come, git up," said Captain Pharo, at the sound, applying the lap of the reins to the horse; "ye've never got us anywheres yet in time to hear 'Amen'! Thar 's no need o' yer shyin' at them spiles, ye darned old fool! Ye hauled 'em thar yourself, yesterday. Poo! poo! Hohum! Wal—wal—never mind—



Git up!"

As we alighted at the school-house, we listened through the open panel with comfort to the final but vociferous refrain of "He will carry you through," and entered in time to take our seats for the class.

Elder Skates stood with a lesson paper in his hand, from which he asked questions with painful literalness and adherence to the text.

The audience, having no lesson paper or previous preparation of the sort, and not daring to enter into

these themes with that originality of thought and expression displayed in their former conversation, answered only now and then, with the pale air of hitting at a broad guess.

"Is sin the cause of sorrow?" said Elder Skates.

No reply.

"Is sin the cause of sorrow?" he repeated faithfully.

At this point, one of a row of small boys on the back seat, no more capable of appreciating this critical period of the Sunday-school than the broad-faced sculpin fish which he resembled, took an alder-leaf from his pocket and, lifting it to his mouth, popped it, with an explosion so successful and loud that it startled even himself.

His guardian (aunt), who sat directly in front of him, though deaf, heard some echo of this note; and seeing the sudden glances directed their way, she turned and, observing the look of frozen horror and surprise upon his features, said severely, "You stop that sithing" (sighing).

Delighted at this full and unexpected escape from guilt and its consequences, the sculpin embraced his fellow-sculpins with such ecstasy that he fell off from his seat, upon the floor.

His aunt, turning again, and having no doubt as to his position this time, lifted him and restored him to his place with a determination so pronounced that the act in itself was clearly audible.

"You set your spanker-beam down there now, and keep still!" she said.

Elder Skates took advantage of this providential disturbance to slide on to the next question:

"How can we escape trouble?"

No reply.

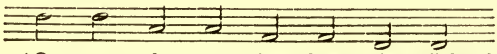
"How can we escape trouble?" he meekly and patiently repeated.

"Good Lord, Skates!" said Captain Pharo, and put his hand in his pocket for his pipe, but bethought himself, and withdrew it, with a deep sigh.

Elder Skates had looked at him with hope, but now again mechanically reiterated:

"How—can—we—escape—trouble?"

"We can't! we can't no way in this world!" said Captain Pharo. "Where in h—ll did you scrape up them questions, Skates? Escape trouble? Be you a married man, Skates? I'd always reckoned ye was! Poo! poo! Hohum! Wal—wal—never mind—



He bethought himself again of his surroundings, spat far out of the window as a melancholy resource, and was silent.

Elder Skates, alarmed and staggered, looked softly down his list of questions for something vaguely impersonal, widely abstract, and now lit upon it with a smile.

"What is the meaning of 'Alphy and Omegy'?" he said—and waited, weary but safe.

But at the second repetition of this inscrutable

conundrum, a lank and tall girl of some fifteen summers, arose and said, not without something of the sublime air becoming a solitary intelligence: 'It's the great and only Pot-entate."

Elder Skates showed no sign of having been hit to death, but gazed vaguely at each one of his audience in turn, and then turned with dazed approval to the girl.

"Very good. Very good indeed," said he. "How true that is! Let us try and act upon it during the week, according to our lights. Providence—nor nothin' else—preventin', we will have our Sunday-school here as usual next Sunday, and I hope we shall all try and keep up religion. Is there anybody willing to have the 'five-cent supper' this week, in order to raise funds for a united burying-ground? We have been long at work on this good cause, but, I'm sorry to say, interest seems to be flaggin'. Is there anybody willin' to have the five-cent supper this week?"

"I can, I suppose," said the woman who had been willing to sing without tune. "But I can't give beans no longer. I can give beet greens and duck."

"I don't think it was any wonder we was gettin' discouraged," said another now resuscitated voice. "Zely had the last one, and Fluke for devilment gets a lot of the Artichokes over early ter help the cause. Wal, you might know there wa'n't no beans left for the Capers and Basins, and Zely was dreadful mortified, for there was several Crooked Rivers."

"Cap'n Nason Teel says," continued that individual's wife, "that the treasury 's fell behind; he says there ain't nothin' made in five-cent suppers, Artichokes or no Artichokes—in beans and corn-beef; he says we've got to give somethin' that don't cost nothin'. Beet greens and duck don't cost nothin', and if that 's agreeable, I'm willin'."

"All the same, beet greens and duck is very good eatin', I think," proposed Elder Skates, and receiving no dissenting voice, continued:

"Providence—nor nothin' else—preventin', there will be a five-cent supper at Cap'n Nason Teel's, on Wednesday evenin'. Beet greens and duck. I will now close the Sunday-school, trusting we shall do all we can during the week to help the cause of the burying-ground and of religion. As soon as Brother Birds'll arrives, we can begin social meetin'."

"It 's natch'all he should be late; somebody said 't he was havin' pickled shad for dinner."

"Here he comes now, beatin' to wind'ard," said Captain Pharo from the window. "He'll make it! The wind 's pilin' in through this 'ere school-house on a clean sea-rake. I move 't we tack over to south'ard of her."

This nautical advice was being followed with some confusion; I did not see Vesty when she came in, but when the majority of us had tacked to south-'ard, I, electing still to remain at the nor'east, saw her, not far in front of me, and knew it was she.

The wind was blowing the little scolding locks of dusky brown hair in her neck; her shoulders were

broad to set against either wind or trouble; she was still and seemed to make stillness, and yet her breast was heaving under hard self-control, her cheeks were burning, her eyes downcast.

I looked. Nestled among those safe to the south-'ard was a young man with very wide and beautiful blue eyes, that spoke for him without other utterance whatever he would. Of medium height and build, yet one only thought, somehow, how strong he was; clad meanly as the rest, even to the rubber storm-bonnet held in his tanned black hand, it was yet plain enough that he was rich, powerful, and at ease.

His wide eyes were on Vesty, and shot appealing mirth at her.

She never once glanced at him, her full young breast heaving.

"Can't some of the brothers fix this scuttle over my head?" said Elder Birds'll nervously, addressing the group of true and tried seamen, anchored cosily to south'ard.

One, Elder Cossey, arose, a Tartar, not much beloved, but prominent in these matters. In his endeavors he mounted the desk and disappeared, wrestling with the scuttle, all except his lower limbs and expansive boots.

"My Lord!" muttered one who had been long groaning under a Cossey mortgage; "ef I could only h'ist the rest of ye up there, and shet ye up!"

"I sh'd like to give him jest one jab with my hat-pin," added a sister sufferer, under her breath.

"The scuttle is now closed," said Elder Birds'll gravely, as Elder Cossey descended, "and the social meetin' is now open."

Here the blow of silence again fell deeply.

The wide blue eyes gave Vesty a look, like the flying ripple on a deep lake.

She did not turn, but that ripple seemed to light upon her own sweet lips; they quivered with the temptation to laugh, the little scolding locks caressed her burning ears and tickled her neck, but she sat very still. I fancied there were tears of distress, almost, in her eyes. I wanted her to lift her eyes just once, that I might see what they were like.

"Hohum!" began Elder Cossey, with wholly devout intentions— "we thank Thee that another week has been wheeled along through the sand, about a foot deep between here and the woods, and over them rotten spiles on the way to the Point, and them four or five jaggedest boulders at the fork o' the woods—I wish there needn't be quite so much zigzagging and shuffling in their seats by them 't have come in barefoot afore the Throne o' Grace," said Elder Cossey, suddenly opening his eyes, and indicating the row of sculpins with distinct disfavor.

"Yes," he continued, "we've been a-straddlin' along through troublements and trialments and afflickaments, hanging out our phiols down by the cold streams o' Babylon, and not gittin' nothin' in 'em, hohum!"

Vibrating thus mysteriously, and free and uncon-

fined, between exhortation and prayer, Elder Cossey finally merged into a recital of his own weakness and vileness as a miserable sinner.

And here a strange thing happened. A brother who had been noticing the winks and smiles cast broadly about, and thinking in all human justice that Elder Cossey was getting more than his share, got up and declared with emotion, that he'd "heered some say how folks was all'as talkin' about their sins for effex, and didn't mean nothin' by it, but I can say this much, thar ain't no talkin' for effex about Brother Cossey; he has been, and is, every bit jest as honest mean as what he 's been a-tellin' on!"

Elder Skates arose, trembling. "Vesty," said he, with unnatural quickness of tone; "will you start 'Rifted Rock'?"

The blue, handsome eyes were on her mercilessly—she was suffocating besides with a wild desire to laugh, her breath coming short and quick. She gave one agonized look at Brother Skates, and then lifted her eyes to the window.

The clouds were sad and grand; there was a bird flying to them.

She fixed her eyes there, and her voice flowed out of her:

> "'Softly through the storm of life,
> Clear above the whirlwind's cry,
> O'er the waves of sorrow, steals
> The voice of Jesus, "It is I."'"

The music in her throat had trembled at first like

the bird's flight, winging as it soared, but now all that was over; her uplifted face was holy, grave:

"'In the Rifted Rock I'm resting.'"

. . . . . .

Elder Cossey forgot his wrath in mysterious deep movings of compunction. Fluke, who had entered, was soft, reverent, his fingers twitching for his violin. Even so, I thought, as I listened, it may be will sound to us some voice from the other shore, when we put out on the dark river.

"Vesty," said a mite of a girl, coming up to her after meeting, "Evelin wants to know if you can set up with Clarindy to-night. She 's been took again."

"Yes," said Vesty, the still look on her face, "I'll come."

"Vesty," said Elder Skates, "when can you haul over the organ and swipe her out? She 's full o' chalk."

"I'll try and do it to-morrow." Vesty looked at Elder Skates and smiled, showing her wholesome white teeth.

"Vesty," said Mrs. Nason Teel; "I want ye to set right down here, now I've got ye, and give me that resute for Mounting Dew pudding."

The blue eyes at the door gave Vesty an imperative, quick glance.

But she sat down by Mrs. Nason Teel; she sat there purposely until all the people were dispersed and the winding lanes were still outside.

Then she went her own way alone, something like tears veiled under those long, quiet lashes.

She saw first a muscular hand on the fence and dared not look up, until Notely Garrison had vaulted over at a bound and stood before her, his glad eyes flashing, his storm hat in his hand.

Then her look was wild reproach.

"Vesty!" he cried. "Is this the way, after all we have been to one another? Have you forgotten how we were like sister and brother, you and I? how Doctor Spearmint led us to school together?" he laughed eagerly. "How"——

"I haven't forgotten, Note. But it can't be the same again, as man and woman, with what you are, and what I am."

"Better! O Vesty!"—he stood quite on a level with her now; she was glad of that. She was a tall girl, taller than he when they parted. "O Vesty!" he drank in her beauty with an awe that uplifted her in his frank, bright gaze—"God was happy when He made you!"

But the girl's eyes only searched his with a Basin gravity, for faith.

A fatal step, searching in Notely's eyes! A beautiful pallor crept over her face, flushing into joy. She ran her hand through his rough, light hair in the old way.

"It has not changed you, being at the schools so long, as I thought it would," she said wistfully, stroking his hair with mature gentleness, though he was older than she. "Why, Note; you look just as brown, and hearty, and masterful as ever!"

"Oh, but it wasn't book-schools I went to, you

know. It was rowing and foot-ball and taking six bars on the running leap, and swinging from the feet with the head downward, and all that. I can do it all."

He looked away from her with mischief in his eyes, and hummed a line through his fine Greek nose, as Captain Pharo might.

"I don't doubt it, but you were high in the college too—for Lunette saw it in a paper: so high it was spoken of!"

"I just asked them to do that, Vesty. People can't refuse me, you know. I get whatever I ask for."

He turned to her with a sort of childish pathos on his strong, handsome face.

She bit her lip for joy and pride in him, even his strange, gay ways.

"Come, Vesta!" he said, with an air of natural and graceful proprietorship; "a stolen meeting is nonsense between you and me. I shall see you home."

II

"SETTIN' ON THE LOG"

His face invited me, the skin drawn over it rather tightly, resembling a death's-head, yet beaming with immortal joy.

He was sitting on a log; his little granddaughter, on the other side of him, was as cheerfully diverted in falling off of it. He was picking his teeth with some mysterious talisman of a bone, selected from the forepaw of a deer, and gazing at the heavens as at a fond familiar brother.

"Won't you set down a spa-ll," he said, and the way he said spell suggested pleasing epochs of rest.

"Leezur's my name; and neow I'll tell ye how ye can all'as remember it; it's jest like all them great discoveries, it's dreadful easy when it's once been thought on. Leezur—leezure—see? Leezure means takin' things moderate, ye know, kind o' settin' areound in the shank o' the evenin'—Leezur—leezure—see!"

Oh, how he beamed! The systems of Newton and Copernicus seemed dwarfed in comparison. I sat down on the log; the little girl, gazing at me in astonishment, fell off.

"What's the marter, Dilly?" said her grandfather,

in the same slow, mellow, jubilant tone with which he had propounded his discovery, and not withdrawing his fond smile from the heavens; "'s the log tew reoundin' for ye to set stiddy on?"

A rattling brown structure rose before us, surrounded by a somewhat firm staging; a skeleton roof, with a few shingles in one corner, twisted all ways by the wind. It told its own tale, of an interrupted vocation.

"I expect to git afoul of her agin to-morrer," continued Captain Leezur; "ef Pharo got my nails when he went up to the Point to-day. Some neow 's all'as dreadful oneasy when they gits to shinglin'; wants to drive the last shingle deown 'fore the first one's weather-shaped. Have ye ever noticed how some 's all'as shiftin' a chaw o' tobakker? Neow when I takes a chaw I wants ter let her lay off one side, and compeound with her own feelin's when she gits ready to melt away. Forced-to-go never gits far, ye know.

"Some 's that way," he resumed; "and some 's sarssy."

I looked up incredulously, but his fostering, abstracted smile was as serene as ever.

"Vesty, neow, stood down there in the lane this mornin', and sarssed me for a good ten minits; sarssed me abeout not havin' no nails, and sarssed me abeout settin' on the log a spall; stood there and sarssed and charffed."

"She is some relative—some grandniece of yours, Captain Leezur?"

"No, oh no. Vesty and me 's only jest mates; but we charff and sarss each other 'tell the ceows come home."

I thought of the tall girl with the holy eyelids and the brave resistance against mirth, and in spite of my predilection for Captain Leezur, his words seemed to me like sacrilege.

"I saw her, Sunday," I said.

"Wal, thar' neow! Vesty 's jest as pious lookin', Sundays, as Pharo's tew-seated kerridge. I tell her, I'm dreadful glad for her sake that there ain't but one Sunday tew a week, she couldn't hold out no longer. Still, she's vary partickeler, Vesty is, and she 's good for taking keer o' folks. Elder Birds'll says 't ef Vesty Kirtland ain't come under 'tonin' grace, then 'tonin' grace is mighty skeerce to the Basin."

"She is beautiful," I said.

"Oh, I don't know 'beout that. Vesty 's a little more hullsome lookin' sometimes 'long in the winter, when she gits bleached out and poored away a bit."

"People seem to depend on her a great deal."

"Sartin they dew. Wal, Vesty 's gittin' on. She 's nineteen year old. She can row a boat, or dew a washin', or help in a deliverunce case, and she 's r'al handy and comfortin' in death-damps."

"All that! Vesty—and nineteen!" I think I sighed.

"Ye mustn't let her kile herself reound ye," said Captain Leezur.

I looked up in dismay. Had he not seen my weakness of body, and my birth-scarred face?

No, apparently he had not; his benign blessed face uplifted, and his voice so glad:

"Ye know how 'tis with women folks; they don't give no warnin', but first ye know they're kilin' themselves all reound and reound yer h'art-strings. They don't know what it 's for and ye don't know what it 's for; but take a young man like you, and ef ye ain't keerful, Vesty'll jest as sartin git in a kile on you as the world."

"How about that strong-looking young man?" I said. "Very easy, swaggers gracefully—with the blue eyes."

"Neow I know jest who you mean! You mean Note Garrison. Sartin, Vesty 's done herself reound him from childhood to old age, as ye might say. I don't know whether he c'd ever unkile himself or not, but I shouldn't want to bet on no man's charnces with a woman like Vesty all weound areound and reound him that way. Some says 't he wouldn't look at a Basin when it comes to marryin'. But thar'! Note all'as kerries sail enough ter sink the boat—but what he says, he'll stick to."

"He is rich, then?"

"Wal, yes. They own teown prop'ty somewhars, and they own all the Neck here, and lays areound on her through the summer. Why, Note's father—he 's dead neow—he and I uster stand deown on the mud flats when we was boys, a-diggin' clarms

tergether, barefoot; 'tell he cruised off somewhar's and made his fortin'.

"I might 'a' done jest the same thing," reflected Captain Leezur aloud, with a pensiveness that still had nothing of unavailing regret in it, "ef I'd been a mind tew; and had a monniment put up over *me* like one o' these here No. 10 Mornin' Glory coal stoves."

I too mused, deeply, sadly.

O placid, unconscious sarcasm! innocent as flowers: wise end, truly, of all earthly ambition! How much more distinguished, after all, Captain Leezur, the spireless grave waiting down there in the little home lot by the sea. Since five-cent suppers do not enrich the donor, and the treasury of the United Burying Ground is permanently low.

"Never mind, Dilly! crawl up agin. What ef ye did tunk onto yer little head; little gals' skulls is yieldin' and sof'."

"What is the weather going to be, Captain Leezur?" I said, following his gaze skyward.

"Wal, I put on my new felts," said he, indicating without any false assumption of modesty those chaste sepulchres enclosing his feet—"hopin' 'twould fetch a rain! said I didn't care ef I did spot my new felts ef 'twould only fetch a rain! One thing," he continued, scanning the dilatory sky with a look that was keen without being severe; "she'll rain arfter the moon fulls, ef she don't afore."

I reluctantly made some sign of going, but was restrained. "Wait a spall," he said; and ran his hand anticipatively into his pocket. He brought to light some lozenges that had evidently just been recovered from blushing intimacy with his "plug" of tobacco.

"Narvine lozenges," he explained; "they're dreadful moderatin' to the dispersition; quiet ye, take some.

"They come high," he confided to me, with the idea of enhancing, not begrudging the gift, as we sucked them luxuriously; "cent apiece, dollar a hunderd. Never mind, Dilly; here 's one o' Granpy's narvine lozenges; p'r'aps it'll help ye to set stiddier."

So, with a glad view to moderating my disposition, I sat with Captain Leezur and the little girl on the log, and ate soiled nervine lozenges, tinctured originally with such primal medicaments as catnip and thoroughwort; and whether from that source or not, yet peace did descend upon me like a river.

As I finally rose to go—

"D'ye ever have the toothache?" said Captain Leezur kindly; "ef ye do, come right straight deown to me, and ef she 's home you shall have her"—and he exhibited beamingly that talismanic little bone cleft from the forepaw of a deer. "Ye pick yer teeth with 'er and ye're sartin never to have the toothache, but ef you've got a toothache, she'll cure ye.

"Mine 's been lent a great deal," he continued proudly. "She 's been as far as 'Tit Menan Light,

and one woman over to Sheep Island kep' her a week once. She 's been sent for sometimes right in the middle o' the night! When there ain't nobody else a-usin' of her, I takes the charnce to pick away with her a little myself. But ef you ever feel the tooth-ache comin' on, come to me direc'—and ef she 's home, you shall have her."

I thanked him with a swelling heart. We shook hands affectionately, and I went on up the lane.

I turned the corner by the school-house. Away back there among the spruce trees, I saw moving figures, red, green, blue, and heard low voices and laughter.

Then I remembered how I had heard the orphan "help" of my hostess, Miss Pray, make a request that she might go "gumming" with the other girls that afternoon.

It was a long perspective to limp through alone, with all those bright, merry eyes peering from behind the spruce trees. But I had not labored over half the way, when I saw one, the tallest one, coming toward me.

Vesty.

"Won't you have some?" she said. "Strangers don't know how good it is; it is very good for you —a little." Yes, she was chewing the gum—a little—herself; but that wild pure resin from the trees, and with, oh, such teeth! such lips! a breath like the fragrant shades she had issued from.

She poured some of her spicy gleanings into my hand.

And now I could see her closely.

I do not know how she would have looked at other men, strong men; but at me she looked as the girl mother who bore me, untimely and in terror, might have done, had she been now in the flesh, mutely protective against all the world, without repugnance, infinitely tender.

"I am coming up to sit with you and Miss Pray, some evening," she said. Her warm brown fingers touched mine. She did not blush; she had her Sunday face—holy, grave.

"Come! God bless you, child!" I said, and limped on, strong against the world.

I sat by the fireplace that evening; not a night in all the year in this sweet north country but you shall find the fire welcome.

Miss Pray's fireplace stretched wide between door and door. Opposite it were the windows; you saw the water, the moon shone in.

Miss Pray did her own farming and was sleepy, yet sat by me with that religious awe of me as befitting one who had elected to pay seven dollars a week for board! I surprised a look of baffled wonder and curiosity on her face now and then, as well as of remorse at allowing me to attach such a mysterious value to my existence.

She did not know that her fire in itself was priceless.

It burned there—part of a lobster trap, washed ashore, three buoys, a section of a hen-coop, a bottomless chopping tray, a drift-wood stump with ten

fantastic roots sending up blue and green flame, a portion of the wheel of an outworn cart, some lobster shells, the eyes glowing, some mussel shells, light green, and seaweed over all, shining, hissing, lisping.

Miss Pray snored gently. I put some of the spruce gum Vesty had given me into my mouth; well, yes, by birth I have very eminent right to aristocratic proclivities.

But the spruce woods came again before me with their balm, and her face. I dwelt upon it fondly, without that pang of hope which most men must endure, and smiled to think of Captain Leezur's dismay if he should know how Vesty had already coiled herself around my heart-strings!

III

"GETTIN' A NAIL PUT IN THE HOSS'S SHU"

THEY never noticed my physical misfortune except in this way: they invited me everywhere; to mill, to have the horse shod, all voyages by sea or land; my visiting and excursion list was a marvel of repletion.

Captain Pharo came down—my soul's brother—with more of "a hitch and a go," than usual in his gait.

"My woman read in some fool-journal somewheres, lately," he explained, "about pourin' kerosene on yer corns and then takin' a match to her and lightin' of her off.

"Wal', I supposed she was a-dressin' my corns down in jest the old usual way, last Sunday mornin', when—by clam! ye don't want to splice onto too young a shipmate, major." (This last was a divinely Basin thought, treating me as a subject of the wars.)

"I've married all states but widders," said Captain Pharo, with a *blasé* air of conjugal experience; "but my advice above all things is," he murmured, lifting his maimed foot, "don't splice onto too young a shipmate. They're all'as a-tryin' some new ructions on ye. Now Vesty, even as stiddy as she is, she 's all'as gittin' the women folks crazy over

some new patron for a apern, or some new resute for pudd'n' and pie. So," he added, "ef you sh'd come to me, intendin' to splice, all the advice 't I c'd give 'ud be, I *don't* know widders; poo! poo!—hohum! Wal, wal—

try widders."

As I stood speechless with conflicting emotions, he lit his pipe and continued, more hopefully:

"I've got to go up to the Point to git a nail put in the hoss's shu, so I come down to ask you to go up to the house and jine us."

Now I already knew that the Basin way of proceeding to get a nail put in the horse's shoe meant a day of widely excursive incident and pleasure, in which the main or stated object was cast far from our poetical vision. I accepted.

"My woman invited Miss Lester to go with us. The old double-decker rides easier for havin' consid'rable ballast, ye know—and Miss Lester tips her at nigh onto about two hunderd; she 's a widder too, ain't she, by the way? but she 's clost onto sixty-seven; hain't no thoughts o' splicin', in course. Miss Lester 's a vary sensible woman. But I thought cruisin' 'round with her kind o' frien'ly on the back seat, ye might git a sort of a token or a consute in general o' what widders is."

"True," said I gratefully, with flattered meditation.

"It 's a scand'lous windy kentry to keep anything

on the clo's-line," said the captain, as we walked on together, sadly gathering up one of his stockings and a still more inseparable companion of his earthly pilgrimage from the path.

"What 's the time, major?" said he, as he led me into the kitchen, "or do you take her by the sun? I had Leezur up here a couple o' days to mend my clock. 'Pharo,' says he, 'thar 's too much friction in her.' So, by clam! he took out most of her insides and laid 'em by, and poured some ile over what they was left, and thar' she stands! She couldn't tick to save her void and 'tarnal emptiness. 'Forced-to-go never gits far,' says Leezur, he says—'ye know.'"

Captain Pharo and I, standing by the wood-box, nudged each other with delight over this conceit.

"'Forced-to-go never gets far, you know,'" said I.

"'Forced-to-go,'" began Captain Pharo, but was rudely haled away by Mrs. Pharo Kobbe, to dress.

That was another thing; apparently they could never get me to the house early enough, pleased that I should witness all their preparations. They led me to the sofa, and Mrs. Kobbe came and combed out her hair—pretty, long, woman's hair—in the looking-glass, over me; and then Captain Pharo came and parted his hair down the back and brushed it out rakishly both sides, over me. Usually I saw the children dressed; they were at school. It was too tender a thought for explanation, this way of taking me with brotherly fondness to the family bosom.

"How do you like Cap'n Pharo's new blouse?" said his wife.

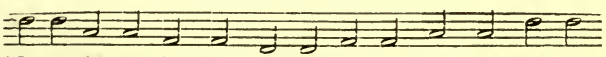
In truth I hardly knew how to express my emotions; while he sniffed with affected disdain of his own brightness and beauty, I was so dim-looking, in comparison, sitting there!

"When I took up the old carpet this spring, I found sech a bright piece under the bed, that I jest took and made cap'n a blouse of her—and wal, thar! what do you think?"

I looked at him again. The hair of my soul's brother had ceased from the top of his head, but the long and scanty lower growth was brushed out several proud inches beyond his ears. He was not tall, and he was covered with sections of bloom; but as he turned he displayed one complete flower embracing his whole back, a tropical efflorescence, brilliant with many hues.

"She is beautiful," I murmured; "what sort of a flower is she?"

"Oh, I don' know," said Captain Pharo, with the same affected indifference to his charms, but there was—yes, there was—something jaunty in his gait now as he walked toward the barn; "they're rather skeerce in this kentry, I expect; some d—d arniky blossom or other! Poo! poo!



'Or as the morning flow'r, The blighting wind sweeps o'er, she with-'

Come, wife, time ye was ready!"

I was not unprepared, on climbing to my seat in

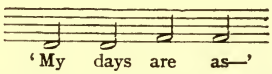
the carriage, to have to contest the occupancy of the cushions with a hen, who was accustomed to appropriate them for her maternal aspirations. I was in the midst of the battle, when Mrs. Kobbe coolly seized her and plunged her entire into a barrel of rain-water. She walked away, shaking her feathers, with an angry malediction of noise.

"Ef they're good eggs, we'll take 'em to Uncle Coffin Demmin' and Aunt Salomy," said Mrs. Kobbe.

She brought a bucket of fresh water, benevolently to test them, but left the enterprise half completed, reminded at the same time of a jug of buttermilk she had meant to put up.

She went into the house, and Captain Pharo, absorbed in lighting his pipe, and stepping about fussily and impatiently, had the misfortune to put a foot into two piles of eggs of contrasting qualities.

"By clam!" said he, white with dismay. "Ho-hum! oh dear! Wal, wal—



Guess, while she 's in the house, I'll go down to the herrin'-shed and git some lobsters to take 'em; they're very fond on 'em." He gave me an appealing, absolutely helpless smile of apology, and the arnica blossom faded rapidly from my vision.

Left in guardianship of the horse, I climbed again to my seat and covered myself with the star bed-quilt, which served as an only too beautiful carriage-robe. Thus I, glowing behind that gorgeous,

ever-radiating star, was taken by Mrs. Kobbe, I doubt not, for the culprit, as she finally emerged from the house and the captain was discovered innocently returning along the highway with the lobsters.

Let this literal history record of me that I said no word; nay, I was even happy in shielding my soul's brother.

"Now," said Mrs. Kobbe, as we set forth, "Miss Lester said not to come to her house for her, but wherever we saw the circle-basket settin' outside the door, there she'd be."

"I wish she'd made some different 'pointment," said the captain, with a sigh.

"Why?"

"Why! don't it strike ye, woman, 't they 's nothin' ondefinite 'n pokin' around over the 'nhabited 'arth, lookin' for the Widder Lester's circle-basket? I was hopin' widders was more definite, but it seems they're jest like all the rest on ye: poo! poo! hohum—jest like all the rest on ye."

"We've got to find her, cap'n; she sets sech store by talkin' along o' major."

"Major!" sniffed the captain; "she ain't worthy to ontie the major's shoe-lockets; they ain't none on 'em worthy, maids, widders—none on 'em!"

I knew to what he referred, what gratitude was moving in his breast.

"Wal, thar now, Cap'n Pharo Kobbe! ain't Vesty Kirtland worthy?"

"Vesty!" said the captain, undismayed—"Vesty

's an amazin' gal, but she ain't nowheres along o' major!"

"Wal, I must say! I wonder whatever put you in such a takin' to major."

He did not say.

We travelled vaguely, gazing from house to house, and then the road over again, without discovering any sign of the basket.

"By clam! it 's almost enough to make an infidel of a man," said the captain, furiously relighting his pipe.

"Cap'n Pharo Kobbe, you're all'as layin' everything either to women or religion."

"Don't mention on 'em in the same breath," said the captain; "don't. They hadn't never orter be classed together!"

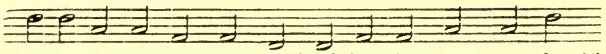
Fortunately at this juncture we saw Mrs. Lester afar off at a fork of the roads standing and waving her arms to us, and we hastened to join her, but imagine the captain's feelings when from the circle-basket she took out a large, plump blueberry pie, or "turnover," for each of us, with a face all beaming with unconscious joy and good-will.

"How do you feel now, eatin' Miss Lester's turnover, after what you've been and said?" said his wife.

"What'd I say?" said the captain boldly, immersed in the joys of his blueberry pie; for a primitive, a generic appetite attaches to this region: one is always hungry; no sooner has one eaten than he is wholesomely hungry again.

"Do you want me to tell what you said, Cap'n Pharo Kobbe?"

"Poo! poo!" said the captain, wiping his mouth with a flourish.



'Or as the morning flow'r, The blighting wind sweeps o'er, she—'"

"You'd ought to join a concert," said his wife, at the stinging height of sarcasm, for the captain's singing was generally regarded as a sacred subject.

But there was one calm spirit aboard, my companion, Mrs. Lester. Ah me! if I might but drive with her again! Her weight was such, settling the springs that side, that I, slender and uplifted, and tossed by the roughness of the road, had continually to cling to the side bars, in order to give a proper air of coolness to our relationship.

But when it came to the pie I had to give up the contest, and ate it reclining, literally, upon her bosom.

"I'm glad I didn't wear my dead-lustre silk," said she tenderly; "it might 'a' got spotted. I'm all'as a great hand to spot when I'm eatin' blueberry pie."

Blessed soul! it was not she; it was my arm that was scattering the contents of the pie.

"You know I board 'Blind Rodgers,'" she went on, still deeper to bury my regret and confusion. I had heard of him; his sightless, gentle ambition it was to live without making "spots."

"Wal, we had blueberry pie for dinner yesterday —and I wonder if them rich parents in New York 't

left him with me jest because he was blind, and hain't for years took no notice of him 'cept to send his board—I wonder if they could 'a' done what he done? I made it with a lot o' sweet, rich juice, and I thought to myself, 'I know Blind Rodgers'll slop a little on the table-cloth to-day,' and I put on a clean table-cloth, jest hopin' he would. But where I set, with seein' eyes, there was two or three great spots on the cloth; and he et his pie, but on his place at table, when he got up, ye wouldn't 'a' known anybody'd been settin' there, it was so clean and white!"

Some tears coursed down her cheeks at the pure recollection—we, who have seeing eyes, make so many spots! I felt the tears coming to my own eyes, for we were as close in sympathy as in other respects.

Meanwhile the ancient horse was taking quite an unusual pace over the road.

"Another sail on ahead there somewhere," said Captain Pharo; "hoss is chasin' another hoss. It 's Mis' Garrison's imported coachman, takin' home some meal, 'cross kentry. He'll turn in to'ds the Neck by 'n' by. Poo! poo! Mis' Garrison wanted Fluke to coach for her; he was so strong an' harnsome; an' she was tellin' him what she wanted him to do, curchy here, and curchy there. 'Mis' Garrison,' says Fluke, 'I'll drive ye 'round wherever ye wants me to, but I'll be d—d if I'll curchy to ye!' So she fetched along an imported one."

Whatever the obsequious conduct of this individual toward Mrs. Garrison, his manners to us were

insolent to a degree. Having once turned to look at us, he composed his hat on one side, grinned, whistled, and would neither turn again nor give us room to pass, nor drive out of a walk, on our account.

"Either fly yer sails, or cl'ar the ship's channel there," cried Captain Pharo at last, snorting with indignation.

The wicked imported coachman continued the same.

It was now that our horse, who had been meanwhile going through what quiet mental processes we knew not, solved the apparent difficulty of the situation by a judicious selection of expedients. He lifted the bag of meal bodily from the coachman's wagon with his teeth, and, depositing it silently upon the ground by the roadside, paused of his own accord and gravely waited for us to do the rest.

The coachman was pursuing his way, unconscious, insolent, whistling.

"She'll take it out o' yer wages; she 's dreadful close," chuckled Captain Pharo, as we tucked the bag of meal away on the carriage floor. "See when ye'll scoff in my sails, and block up the ship's channel ag'in! Now then; touch and go is a good pilot," and we struck off on a divergent road at a rattling pace.

But these adventures had exhausted so much time, when we arrived at Crooked River it was high tide, and the bridge was already elevated for the passage of a schooner approaching in the distance.

"See, now, what ye done, don't ye?" said Captain Pharo—I must say it—with mean reproach, to his wife; "we've got to wait here an hour an' a half."

"Wal, thar, Cap'n Pharo Kobbe, seems to me I wouldn't say nothin' 'g'inst Providence nor nobody else, for once, ef I'd jest got two dollars' worth o' meal, jest for pickin' it up off'n the road."

Touched by this view of the case, the captain sang with great cheerfulness that his days were as the grass or as the morning flower—when an inspiration struck him.

"I don' know," said he, "why we hadn't just as well turn here and go up Artichoke road, and git baited at Coffin's, 'stid er stoppin' to see 'em on the way home. I'm feelin' sharp as a meat-axe ag'in."

"I don' know whether the rest of ye are hungry or not," said plump little Mrs. Kobbe; "but I'm gittin as long-waisted as a knittin'-needle."

The language of vivid hyperbole being exhausted, Mrs. Lester and I expressed ourselves simply to the same effect. We turned, heedful no longer of the tides, and travelled delightfully along the Artichoke road until we reached a brown dwelling that I knew could be none other than theirs—Uncle Coffin's and Aunt Salomy's; they were in their sunny yard, and before I knew them, I loved them.

"Dodrabbit ye!" cried Uncle Coffin Demmin, springing out at us in hospitable ecstasy, Salomy beside him; "git out! git out quick! The sight on

ye makes me sick, in there. Git out, I say!" he roared.

"No-o; guess not, Coffin," said Captain Pharo, with gloomy observance of formalities; "guess I ca-arnt; goin' up to the Point to git a nail put in my hoss's shu-u."

But Uncle Coffin was already leading the horse and carriage on to the barn floor.

"Dodrabbit ye!" he exclaimed, "git out, or I'll *shute* ye out."

At this invitation we began to descend with cheerful alacrity.

As the horse walked into an evidently familiar stall, Uncle Coffin seized Captain Pharo and whirled him about with admiring affection.

"Dodrabbit ye, Pharo!" he cried, struck with the new jacket; "ye've been to Boston!"

"I hain't; hain't been nigh her for forty year," said Captain Pharo, but he was unconscionably pleased.

"Dodrabbit ye, Pharo! ye've been a-junketin' around to Bar Harbor; that 's whar' ye been."

"I hain't, Coffin; honest I hain't been nigh her," chuckled Captain Pharo.

"Dodrabbit ye, Pharo!" said Uncle Coffin, seizing the hat from his head and regarding its bespattered surface with delight; "ye've been a-whitewashin'!"

This Captain Pharo proudly did not deny. "Dodrabbit ye, Pharo!" said our fond host, giving him another whirl, "yer hair 's pretty plumb 'fore, but she 's raked devilish well aft. Ye can't make no

stand fer yerself! Ye're hungry, Pharo; ye're wastin'; come along!"

Uncle Coffin seized me on the way, but in voiceless appreciation of my physical meanness he supported me with one hand, while he affectionately mauled and whirled me with the other.

"Dodrabbit ye! you young spark, you! whar' ye been all this time?" he cried—though I had never gazed upon his face before!

His rough touch was a galvanic battery of human kindness. It thrilled and electrified me. No; he had not even seen my pitiful presence. I do not know where the people of the world get their manners; but these Artichokes got theirs, rough-coated though they were, straight from the blue above.

"Say! whar' ye been all this time? That 's what I want to know," sending a thrill of close human fellowship down my back. "Didn't ye reckon as Salomy and me 'ud miss ye, dodrabbit ye! you young lawn-tennis shu's, you!"

I glanced down at my feet. They were covered with a thick crust of buttermilk and meal. I remembered now to have experienced a pleasant sensation of coolness at my feet at one time, being too closely wedged in with Mrs. Lester and the meal, however, to investigate.

We found, on searching the carriage, that the jug had capsized, and one of the lobsters had extracted the cork, which he still grasped tightly in his claw.

"Look at that, Coffin," said Captain Pharo sadly; "even our lobsters is dry!"

"Wal, I'm cert'nly glad now," said Mrs. Lester, surveying the bottom of her gown, "'t I didn't wear my dead-lustre silk."

"Why so, Mis' Lester; why so?" said Uncle Coffin, performing a waltz with the small remaining contents of the buttermilk jug. "Ef it 's a beauty in her to have her lustre dead, why wouldn't she be still harnsomer to have her lustre dedder!"

He drew me aside at this, and for some moments we stood helplessly doubled over with laughter. For the climate serves one the same in regard to jokes as in food. One is never satiated with them, and there are no morbid, worn distinctions of taste—an old one, an exceedingly mild one, have all the convulsive power of the keenest flash from less healthy and rubicund intellects.

When we had recovered ourselves sufficiently to walk, we went into the house, arm in arm. There Uncle Coffin seized Captain Pharo again and threw him delightedly several feet off into a chair.

"Ye're weary, Pharo, dodrabbit ye! Set thar'. Repose. Repose. Wait 'tell the flapjacks is ready. They're fryin'. Smell 'em?"

We perceived their odor, and that of the wild strawberries and coffee which Mrs. Lester had taken from her circle-basket.

"Why, father," said Aunt Salomy, as we sat at table, giving me a glance indicative of a beaming conversance with elegant conventionalities; "ye *shouldn't* set the surrup cup right atop o' the loaf o' bread.'

"Never mind whar' she sets, mother," said Uncle Coffin gayly, "so long as she 's squar' amidships."

He would pour out the treacle for us all—for that it was sweeter, sweeter than any refined juices I ever tasted. No denials, no protestations would avail to stay the utter generosity of his hand.

The griddle-cakes were of the apparent size of the moon when she is full in the heavens.

"Come, Pharo, brace up. Eat somethin', dod-rabbit ye! Ye're poorin' away every minute ye're settin' there; ye hain't hauled yerself over but two yit."

"By clam! Coffin, sure as I'm a livin' man, I've hauled myself over fourteen," said Captain Pharo seriously.

"Come, come, major; ye're fadin' away to a shadder. Ye hain't hauled yerself over nothin' yet."

"Oh, I have," I rejoined, with urgent truth and unction. "I can't, honestly I can't, haul myself over anything more."

In spite of some suggestive winks directed on my behalf, not then understood, I remained innocently with Mrs. Lester and Aunt Salomy while they were doing the dishes. But presently through the open window where I sat I felt a bean take me sharply in the nape of the neck, and, turning, I discovered Captain Pharo outside. He winked at me. I naïvely winked back again. He coughed low and meaningly; I smiled and nodded.

He disappeared, and ere long I felt one of my

ears tingling from the blow of another bean. It was Uncle Coffin this time; his wink was almost savage with excess of meaning. I returned it amiably. He coughed low and hopelessly, and disappeared.

But soon after he came walking nonchalantly into the room.

"Dodrabbit ye, major!" said he, punching me with a vigorous hand, "don't ye take no interest in a man's stock? Come along out and look at the stock."

At that I rose and followed him. Captain Pharo was waiting for us. They did not speak, but they led the way straight as the flight of an arrow to the barn, walked undeviatingly across the floor, lifted me solemnly ahead of them up the ladder to the haymow, stumbled across it to the farthest and darkest corner, dived down into it and brought up an ancient pea-jacket, unrolled it, and produced from the pocket a bottle, labelled with what I at once knew to be Uncle Coffin's own design:

"RAT PISON TO TOUCH HER IS DETH."

"Drink!" said Uncle Coffin.

All his former levity was gone. He had the look of bestowing, and Captain Pharo of witnessing bestowed, upon another, a boon inestimable, priceless, rare.

A temperate familiarity with the use of the cup informed me at once of the nature of this liquid. It was whiskey of a very vile quality.

But even had it contained something akin to the

dark sequel on its label, I could not have refused it from Uncle Coffin's hand.

Slightly I drank. Captain Pharo drank. Uncle Coffin drank.

The bottle was replaced, and we as solemnly descended.

I had never been unwarily affected, even by a much larger quantity of the pure article; perhaps by way of compensation an electric spark from Uncle Coffin's own personality had entered into this compound. More likely still, it was the radiant atmosphere.

But I remembered standing out leaning against the pig-pen, with Captain Pharo and Uncle Coffin, of nudging and being nudged by them into frequent excess of laughter over some fondly rambling anecdote or confiding witticism, until Captain Pharo, "taking the sun," decided to put off until some other day going to the Point to get a nail put in the horse's shoe.

I remembered—well might I, for they were in my own too—the honest tears in the eyes of Uncle Coffin and Aunt Salomy as we parted; of being tucked in again under the Star, with new accessions to our store, of dried smelts and summer savory, and three newly born kittens in a bag, which I was instructed to hold so as to give them air without allowing them to escape. Yes, and of the dying splendor of the sun, the ineffable colors painting sea and sky; and of knowing that if I had not already become a Basin, I should inevitably have joined the Artichokes.

IV

LOVE, LOVE

At Garrison's Neck was the old Garrison "shanty" —Notely's ideal; well preserved; built on to it a spacious dwelling, with stables attached, after Mrs. Garrison's idea.

Notely's shanty was a mixture of elegant easy-chairs and drying oil-skin raiment, black tobacco pipes, books, musical instruments, fishing-tackle, mirth and evening firelight; all the gravitation of the premises was toward it—the Garrison guests yearned for it.

His mother was with him now.

"You will drive down to the boat with me and meet them, Notely?"

Notely whistled with respectful concern, but his eyes were as happy as the dawn.

"Oh, well, ah—h—I'll have to ask you to let Tom drive you down to-day, mother. I've an engagement to sail over to Reef Island."

Mrs. Garrison did not condescend to look annoyed. She smiled, sweet and high.

"Considering the social position of Mrs. Langham and her daughter, and their wealth, Notely, you might postpone even that engagement. Possibly

you could arrange to play with the fisher girl some other day."

When Notely was puzzled or provoked he felt for the pipe in his pocket, just like old Captain Pharo, laughed, and came straight again.

"Why, mother! you were a Basin girl yourself—the 'Beauty of the Basins,'" he said, with soft pride—he knew no better—and smiled as though he saw another face.

"Are you foolish?" said his mother, giving way sharply.

When one has come from such degree, has sought above all earthly good, and earned, a social eminence such as Mrs. Garrison had attained, it will leave some unbending lines on lip and brow; the eyes will not melt easily, although it wrings one's heart to find that one's only child is, after all, an ingrained Basin; yet their features were the same, only Notely's were simple, expressive Basin eyes—hers had become elevated.

"You! who have *in* you such success, if you only would!" she cried.

"'Success,' I'm afraid, mother," said Notely, with one of those sighs that was like a wayward note on his violin; "it 's a diviner thing, however, you know, to have in you the capacity for failure."

"You are as remarkable a mixture of barbarism and sentiment as your shanty," sneered Mrs. Garrison, looking about. "Do you speak in the Basin 'meetings'?"

"No," said Notely. "I ought to. Think of

what I have had, and their deprivations. But there 's always something comes up so d—d funny!"

Mrs. Garrison smiled sympathetically now. "O Notely, think of the Langhams, and Grace even willing to show her preference for you, decorously, of course, but we all know."

Notely grabbed his pipe hard and shook his head.

"Why?" said his mother again, sharply. "I am sure Miss Langham is nearly as boisterous and in as rude health as the fisher girl. I have even known her to make important endearing lapses in grammar."

Notely was silent.

"Do you think, after a life-struggle to earn a place in society, it is filial and generous on your part, for the sake of a fisher sweetheart, to be willing to sink your family back again into skins and Gothicism?"

"Yes," said the young man, a hurricane in his blue eyes, which his strong hands gripped back.

"Very well; if you so elect, go back then, and be a common fisherman; but you shall have no countenance of mine."

"Shouldn't wonder if it would be a good thing. With the health I have, give me leisure and plenty of money, and I'm always certain to break the traces and make a run. Common fisherman it is." But he stood out bravely at the same time in an extravagant new yachting costume, for he was going by appointment to meet his sweetheart.

"You might help her up, mother—socially, that is; she needs no other help."

"Never!"

Notely lifted his cap to his mother—the reproach in his eyes was as dog-like as if he had not just graduated from the schools—and walked away.

She looked after him, a scornful sweet smile curving her lips. As the apple of her eye she loved him; it is necessary but hard to be elevated.

Notely put up sail and skirted the shore with his boat till he came to the waters of the Basin. Then he looked out eagerly, but Vesty was not on the banks waiting.

"Was there ever a Basin known to be on time? he muttered, smiling and flushing too. He was always jealous of her.

He made fast his boat and sprang with light steps over the sea-wall.

Here was a good sign; so the Basins held. No sign so propitious to a love affair as meeting with one of God's innocent ones—a "natural." And here was Dr. Spearmint (Uncle Benny) leading the children to school—the very little ones. They clung to him, and one he carried.

And he was singing, in a sweet, high voice:

"We all have our trials here below,
Sail away to Galilee!
. . . . .
There's a tree I see in Paradise,
Sail away to Galilee!
. . . . .
Sail away to Galilee,
Sail away to Galilee,
Put on your long white robe of peace,
And sail away to Galilee!"

"Hello! Uncle Benny—'Dr. Spearmint'"—he liked that best. "Well, how are you? how are you? and have you seen Vesty this morning?"

"Fluke and Gurd 's keepin' company with her this mornin'," said Dr. Spearmint, in a voice softer than a woman's. "I jest stopped to sing a little with 'em on the way. I *look* dreadful," he added, rather ostentatiously fingering a light blue necktie.

"Oh, no, doctor; fine as usual," exclaimed Notely, anger in his soul, but with heart-broken eyes.

"I suppose," said the soft, sweet voice, "there 's a great deal o' passin' in New York, ain't there?"

"What, doctor?"

"A great deal o' passin' there, ain't there?"

"Oh, sights of it! Oh, my, yes! passing along the streets all the time."

"Some there 's worth four or five thousand dollars, ain't they?" said the sweet, incredulous voice.

"God bless you! yes, doctor! the more 's the pity," said Notely, with strange earnestness. "And how 's fruiting?"

"Dangleberries are quite plenty, thank you," the voice replied. When he had left the little ones at school he would go off and gather berries; but he would call for them without fail and lead them home. The little, tired, restless souls always found him out there in the sweet air and sunshine, waiting. Notely remembered; so he and Vesty had been led.

He passed, singing, out of sight with the children;

"Sail away to Galilee,
Sail away to Galilee,
Put on your long white robe of peace,
And sail away to Galilee!"

Notely felt a homesick pang. Vesty was his home; he walked on toward her threshold. Vesty's father had taken a new wife, and Vesty was almost always seen now with a baby in her arms.

So she was sitting as Notely drew near; and Fluke and Gurdon were there, with a pretence of fingering their violins. They looked up, as if expecting him.

"Why did you not come, Vesty?" said her lover. "You promised me."

"I've got something to say about that," said Fluke. "I sot Vesty down on that doorhold, and I threatened to shute her ef she moved off'n it. When she was tellin' Gurd' that you was 'round again wantin' to keep company with her jest the same, says I, 'We'll see about that.' Vesty hain't got no brothers, nor no mother, to look after her, and so Gurd' and me, which is twin brothers to each other, is also goin' to be brothers to her, and see that there ain't no harm done to Vesty."

"Well, then, Fluke, you are the best friends that either of us have," said Notely calmly.

"Why didn't ye let her alone in peace?" blurted out Fluke. "She was keepin' company contented enough along o' Gurd', ef you'd only left her alone. What'd ye come back a-makin' love to her for?"

"Because she is going to be my wife," said Note-

ly. "We always kept company together, since we were that high! Belle Birds'll was Gurdon's company. Vesty was my company." His voice trembled. This was simple Basin parlance and unanswerable.

"Ye mean it?"

"If you want to fight, Fluke, come out and fight." Notely's eyes cut him.

"All the same," said he, "ef you sh'd happen to change your mind by 'n' by, as fash'nable fellers in women's light-colored clo's does sometimes, there 's a-goin' to be shutin'."

Notely grabbed his pipe, and his laugh rang out.

"Come," he said, "you know me! you know me! Confound the pretty clothes! I only put them on so as to try and have Vesty like me!"

"Wal' now, Vesty, make your choice. You'd ruther keep company along o' Note than Gurd', had ye?" But he could not restrain the severe contempt in his voice in making the comparison.

Vesty had been soothing her face in the baby's frowzled hair.

"*I told you*," she said. But she glanced up at Gurdon, and her face was piteous, his had turned so white.

"Come, Gurd'! What d'ye care? Go on, Vesty, ef ye want to. Gurd 'n' me'll tote the baby till Elvine gits back." He took the infant and began to toss it, to compensate it for Vesty's withdrawal. His thick black hair fell over his forehead, his nose was fine and straight. Gurdon came forward obedi-

ently to assist him. He had the same great bulk and even handsomer features, only that his hair was smooth and parted.

Vesty and her lover passed on together. Her heart was leaping with joy and pride of him; still, she saw Gurdon's look.

"You have been so long at that great college, Notely."

"Yes."

"Why must some one always be hurt?"

"We go to school, but the schools can't teach us anything, Vesty.

"'Oh, sail away to Galilee,
Sail away to Galilee!'"

he hummed airily, gayly. "What was it you 'told them' back there, Vesty?"

Where now was Vesty's Sunday face? You would look far to find it.

"I told them you were a dude," said she.

"Did you, indeed! Girls who lead the singing in Sunday-school are not telling many very particular fibs this morning, are they? But you shall own up before night."

O Vesty!—the call of the "whistlers" down in the meadow by the sea-wall—"love! love! love!" No other note; it is that, too, breathing in the swift sails and bounding the sea!

"You sail your boat as well as ever, Captain Notely."

"And why not—wife?"

These were the appellations of the old days, taken from their elders—"cap'n" and "wife."

Vesty did not think he would have dared *that*. Her dark eye chastised him. But he was not looking impudent; he was resolute and pale.

Vesty shivered. With all her earnest, sad experience of life, with her true love for Notely, she was yet in no haste to be bound. Wild, too, at heart; or else somehow the sea wind and the swift sails had freed her.

"Don't say that again. Come, catch the fish for our dinner, Note."

"I'm only a humble Basin, Miss Kirtland. I didn't think to fetch no bait."

Vesty took a parcel of six small herrings from her pocket, laughing.

"Yes, our women are smart," sighed Notely

"Shall you catch, or will I?"

"You," said Notely, tossing out the anchor.

He watched her, strong and beautiful, her lips pursed with the feline pursuit of prey, as she baited her hook and threw out the line, quite oblivious now, apparently, of him.

He saw her thrill with excitement as the line stiffened and she began to haul in, hand over hand; it was a big cod too. Vesty always had the luck. There was glory in her cheeks when she brought the struggling, flopping fish over into the boat.

"Vesty," said Note mischievously, drawing near, "how would *you* feel to be caught like that on the end of somebody's line — struggling, flopping?"

His sentimental tone gave way in spite of himself. She turned and gave him a smart box on the ear.

"Very well, Miss Vesty Kirtland, very well. But there 's a marriage ceremony and a binding to 'love, honor and obey,' after which young women don't box their husbands' ears — aha !—at least, mine won't."

"Notely Garrison," said Vesty, with Basinly and womanly indignation, "I never fished for you in all my life—never!"

"Instinctive, darling; not your fault. Unconscious cerebration; do you understand?"

She did, a little, and she grievously disapproved of him.

"Kiss me, dearest," he pleaded. "You kissed me once, when I first came home."

"All the m-more reason why you ought not to ask me now. I w-wish you'd get your m-mind on something besides me."

Notely walked away, pulled up the anchor, and set sail again. Vesty composed herself at the end of the boat.

"Sweet-tempered child!" said he, regarding her from the helm.

She dipped her hand in the water and smoothed her stray locks; they curled up again. She was distressed, and Notely's mirthful eyes gave her no rest.

"My mind is still on you, Vesty—and will be for ever and aye, sweetheart."

With that he turned kindly and looked away, and Vesty bound up her hair.

Presently: "The tapestries are beautiful to-day, Note," she said.

They were sailing through the shallows near Reef Island, and they looked down through the green water. Gold, bronze and yellow, and dark velvet green, the tracings of broad sea-leaf and trailing vine on that floor.

"There isn't another house in any land tapestried like ours, Vesty. Say, wouldn't that be a charming place, after all, to rest, when——"

"You're getting aground, Note!"

"Thank you! How fortunate that you are aboard! I know how to steer a boat a little, of course, but nothing like——"

Vesty laughed, dazzled by this sarcasm. "But you didn't think of the bread or the salt or the pork for the chowder," said she triumphantly.

"Ah, I see you have them. You always think of those things. You were always my little woman, you know. You are my home."

As the boat touched the ledge she sprang out before him. By the time he had fastened his boat and clambered over the ledges with the kettle which he had brought from the crane in his shanty, Vesty had a fire of drift-wood burning.

She prepared the chowder, while he whittled out some forks of wood and gathered firm pieces of kelp for dishes.

They ate, with only the voice of the gulls, screaming, flying in disturbed, beautiful flight over the wide, lone island.

"Now for the gulls' eggs," said Vesty, rising, no dishes to put away.

"What a carnivorous little wild-cat it is—for one so necessary to the sick and afflicted!"

"Didn't you come to hunt gulls' eggs, Note?"

"You know that that is my sole aim and ambition in life. Come!"

Over ledges and salt marshes, at the feet of the thin, storm-broken trees, they found them, nestled there, three, four, eight in a nest, the birds flying, circling overhead. Vesty gathered them in her apron, eager, searching from tree to tree. Her hair came down. She looked up at Note, apologetic, humble, so eager she hardly minded.

"Hold my apron, Note."

This he did obediently.

With downcast eyes and a blush on her cheeks that would have exonerated Eve, she wound up her hair again, and restored her own hold on her apron.

"I did not kiss you then, Vesty."

"Well, of course."

"I'm good, but my mind is still on you."

Over ledges and salt marshes, and the thin, storm-broken trees, and out there on the water there 's a strange color growing. Even the Basins seldom fail to *start*, at least, for home by sunset.

So a little white sail puts out on the crimson sea. The breeze is dying out, the waters lap, subside. Notely takes down the sail and rows.

The sea fades to softer colors, hushed, wondrous, near the dim shore.

"It isn't ever known, in any place in all the world, that angels—no, I know—but look, Note!—they almost might."

"Only here at the Basin, Vesty; when that very last light fades. I saw two flying up—flying back again—just now. How many did you see?"

She turned her happy, awesome eyes on him, but his keen face, in that light, was as simple and pathetic as her own.

"But my mind is on *you*, Vesty. Now, before we touch the shore, when will you marry me?"

"I've been thinking. O Note, perhaps it isn't my place to marry you; perhaps I wouldn't do you any good to marry you, Note. They say you were first in your class, off there, and there are so many things for you, and your mother, and friends, will help you so much more—if I don't."

"I may as well tell you the truth, Vesty. I'm not that strong person that I look"—the angels that he saw, flying up, will forgive that sly smile on the boy's mouth—"I couldn't go away and leave you, and go into that false, feverish struggle out there, and live anything more than the wreck of a life, at least. I'm affected."

"Where is it that you have such trouble, Note?"

"It 's my heart, Vesty Kirtland. I must have a Basin for my wife, calm, strong, sweet; one who can see the 'angels' now and then—just you, in fact."

He handed her out of the boat and walked home with her. At the edge of the alders they stood. They could see the light in her father's house.

"When, Vesty?" he repeated.

"O Note, I love you!" she sobbed; "but I must have a little time to think. Every girl has that."

"Very well. You must *keep your mind on me*, however."

"Hark! hear the poplars tremble. You know what always makes them sigh and shiver that way, Note?"

"I've forgotten."

"They made the cross for Christ out of the poplars; they never got over it—see them shiver!—hush!"

"O my beautiful one!" He took her hands. "What was it you 'told them' back there this morning, Vesty, before we started?"

"You are cruel! O Note!"

He drew her to him. Her lips would not tell. Her Basin eyes, that he was gazing mercilessly into, betrayed her.

"Good child! sweet child! with my strong right arm, and a willingness for all toil and patience and endeavor, and all my soul's love, I thee endow." He kissed her solemnly.

"Love, love, love," chanted in ecstasy a thrush from the dim recesses of the wood.

V

COLUMBUS AND THE EGG, AND LOT'S WIFE

"I OFTEN thinks o' Columbus and the egg. All them big folks in Spain was settin' areound, ye know, ta'ntin' of him, and sayin' as how an egg couldn't be made to sot.

"So Columbus, he took one up and give her a tunk, pretty solid, deown onto the table. 'There!' says he; 'you stay sot,' says he, 'and keep moderate a spall,' says he. 'Forced-to-go never gits far,' says he.

"Then there was Lot's wife.

"I don't remember jest the partickelers, nor what she was turnin' areound to look for; whether she was goin' to a sewin'-circle and lookin' back to see what Lot was dewin' to home, or whether she was jest strokin' deown her polonaise a little, the way women does; but anyway, she was one o' this 'ere kind that needed moderatin'.

"So she got turned into a pillar o' salt, and there she sot. But I've heerd lately that she 's got up and went?"

"I don't know," I murmured.

"Yes; Nason was tellin' me how 't, the last time

he went cruisin', he met a man 't 'd jest come from Jaffy, 't told him how 't Lot's wife had got up and went.

"Wal, I was glad to hear on't. Moderation 's a virtu', even in all things. She must 'a' sot there some three or four hunderd pretty consid'rable number o' years, 's it was. Don't want to ride a free hoss to death, ye know. I wish 't this critter that 's visitin' up to Garrison's Neck could be got sot a spall. She fa'rly w'ars me out."

Captain Leezur blinked at the sun, however, all heavenly placid and unworn.

"I happened to meet her in the lane," I said. "She had not seen me before. She screamed."

"Thar'! that 's jest her! Wal, neow, I hope ye didn't mind. Sech folks don't do no harm 'reound on the 'arth, no more'n lady-bugs, 'nd r'a'ly, they dew help to parss away the time.

"Neow this Langham girl, she driv up here with Note t'other day, to git some lobsters.

"'O Mr. Garrison,' says she, 'see that darlin' old aberigin*a*le a-settin' out thar' on that log,' says she. 'Dew drive up; I want ter talk to him,' says she.

"Wal, I put in a chaw o' tobackker, and tucked her up comf'table one side, and there I sot, with my head straight for'ards, not lettin' on as I'd heered a word; t'wouldn't dew, ye know.

"So she came up with a yaller lace parasol, abeout twelve foot in c'cumf'rence, sorter makin' me think of a tud under a harrer; though, I sh'd have

to say it afore the meetin'-house, she was dreadful purty-lookin', an' blamed ef she didn't know it.

"Wal, I see she'd made up her mind to kile herself 'reound me, ef she could. She kept a-arskin' questions, and everything she arsked I arnswered of her back dreadful moderate, and every time I arnswered of her back she'd give a little larff, endin' up on 'sol la ce do,' sorter highsteriky; so't I was kind o' feelin' areound in my pocket t' find her a narvine lozenger.

"And then I thought I wouldn't. All they want is the least little excuse and they'll begin to kile. When ye're in deoubt, ye know, stand well to leeward."

I looked at my friend with new gratitude, for the perils he had passed.

"She said she thought the folks to the Basin was so full of yewmer and pathers, 'don't yew?' says she.

"Wal, I told her I didn't know ars to that. 'Yewmer 's that 'ar' 'fliction 't Job had, ain't it?' says I, 'and pathers—thar' ye've kind o' got me,' says I, ''less maybe it 's some fancy New York way o' reelin' off pertaters,' says I.

"'Oh, dear!' says she, kind o' highsteriky ag'in, and Note driv off with her, she a-wavin' her hand to me: but I set straight for'ards, not lettin' on to take no notice of her. 'No, no, young woman,' thinks I to myself, 'ye don't git in no kile on me!'"

The nervine lozenge which my friend had cautiously refrained from giving Miss Langham he now

bestowed upon me. I accepted it, for I was in sore need of it.

I could not refrain from asking him, however, if he had offered Miss Langham his deer-bone tooth-pick.

"No," said he, "she 's lent neow, anyway. John Seabright 's got her over to Herrinport. I don't say but what if that 'ar' Langham girl sh'd have a r'al bad spall o' toothache come on, but what I'd let her take her, but I'd jest as soon she didn't know nothin' 'beout it. I'd ruther not make no openin' for a kile."

We sucked our nervine lozenges with mutual earnestness.

"You are getting on finely with the barn," I said, noticing several new rows of shingles on the roof.

"Yes, I sh'd be afoul of her ag'in to-day, only 't Nason come over yisterday and borrowed my lardder. I'm expectin' of him back with her along in the shank o' the evenin'. Preachin' ain't so bad," continued my friend, contemplatively, as the school-teacher passed by; "but I'd ruther be put to bone labor 'n school teachin'. Ye've all'as got to be thar', no marter heow many other 'ngagements——"

"Leezur!" called the soft voice of a Basin matron from the door. "Leezur, have ye fished the bucket out o' the well?"

"Jest baitin' my hook, mother," said my friend, his face breaking into the broadest human beam I ever saw.

He rose, and we walked toward the well. Now

first I noticed his gait; every step was a smiling protest against further advancement, which, however, was made not unwillingly.

I observed, too, an illustration of this same smile in his rear, made by an unconscious and loving wife, in a singular disposition of patches: three on his blouse fortuitously representing eyes and nose, and a long horizontal one, lower down, combining with these in an undesigned but felicitous grin.

My friend disclosed this smiling posterior to full view, stretching himself face downward on the earth, and burying his head, with the grappling pole, in the well.

"This 'ere job," his voice came to me with resonant jubilance, "requires a vary moderate dispersition: 'specially arfter the women folks has been a-grapplin' for her, and rilin' the water, and jabbin' of her furder in. But ef we considers ourselves to be—as we be—heirs of etarnity——

"Thought I'd got ye that time! But neow don't be too easy abeout gittin' caught, down there! Priceless gems holds themselves skeerce, ye know."

In which sarcastic but ever reasonable and moderate conversation with that coy bucket I left my friend, and continued on my way with my basket, under Miss Pray's commission to purchase "dangleberries" at the home of Dr. Spearmint.

I heard as I approached:

"Oh the road is winding, the road is dark,
But sail away to Galilee!
Sail away to Galilee!"

* * *

There was a company as usual gathered at Dr. Spearmint's weather-beaten hut: the door wide open, one could see his bed neatly made by his own hands within, his mother's picture against the wall, a sweet, intelligent face—like his, only that in his there was some light gone out forever for this world.

Notely was there with Miss Langham, to hear Dr. Spearmint sing, and to purchase berries, and to be entertained a little in this way in the growing evening.

Miss Langham did not scream on seeing me now. She smiled upon me with manifest kindness and condescension. She had beautiful bright brown eyes, and the "style" of town life pervaded her very atmosphere.

"Doctor," said Notely, "Miss Langham has heard about you, and, ahem! considering what she has heard, she is perfectly willing to make the first advances."

Dr. Spearmint bowed, stammering before such new bewitchment and beauty.

"I *look* dreadful," he said, fingering his blue necktie.

"Oh, dear, no, doctor!" rippled out Miss Langham's voice, in willing accompaniment of the joke; "I'm sure you are perfectly charming!"

"Miss Langham is from New York," said Notely.

"There 's a great deal o' passin' there, ain't there?" said Dr. Spearmint in his soft voice, turning to her.

"What?" said she to Notely. "Oh, my! oh, how funny! oh dear, yes, doctor; you've no idea!"

"Some there 's worth——"

Notely, laughing, pressed with his muscular brown hand a note into Dr. Spearmint's hand that would do more for his next winter's comfort than many weeks of dangleberrying.

"Miss Langham would like to have her fortune told, doctor," he said.

She pulled off her glove with a laughing grace. As Dr. Spearmint took her slender jewelled hand in his he trembled with vanity and happiness. He brushed a joyful tear from his eye, and began:

"I see a bew-tiful future here," he said.

"Oh, my!" said Miss Langham, looking up at him, her mirthful eyes full of incredulous rapture.

"Yes, I see a tall man, quite a tall man."

Dr. Spearmint himself was quite a tall man.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Langham.

"He has curly brown hair and a—a smooth face," said Dr. Spearmint, delighted in his delight. *He* had curly brown hair and a smooth face.

"He has blue eyes"—he glanced, a little troubled, at Notely's big sparkling orbs—"*mild* blue eyes," he corrected the statement, in such a soft voice!

"Indeed they must be *mild*," cried Miss Langham.

Dr. Spearmint coughed considerably, and blushed.

"He—he wears a blue necktie," he said, the mild blue eyes falling.

"O Dr. Spearmint! I believe—why, it must be *you!*" cried the merry girl, with a laugh as gay as rushing brooks.

The boys and girls in the audience laughed loudly at this not unexpected climax.

Dr. Spearmint, much embarrassed, went inside to put away his money, but was seen to steal sly glances, and a rearrangement of the blue neck-ribbon in his little cracked mirror.

"Dew come again!" he said faintly, as they were going.

"Why, certainly, as the understanding is now, Miss Langham will expect to call often, I suppose," said Notely.

"Oh, dear me! yes," cried Grace Langham.

"Are we—ahem!"—Dr. Spearmint could not lift those mild blue eyes—"are we engaged?"—his sweet voice sinking, almost inaudible.

"Oh, positively, doctor! Why, of course! Oh, dear me! good-by, poor dear. Oh, how pathetically amusing!" said she, walking with Notely toward the carriage.

A tall girl had come up, and stood in the shadow, in the doorway.

Notely, catching a glimpse of her in passing, lifted his cap, his face burning, his eyes glowing, with a look of intense love and of possession.

Grace Langham turned, with a woman's instinct.

Vesty, standing there, dim and tall, in her laceless, fashionless gown, met her glance with a long, serious look that contained nothing either of alarm or suspicion.

"I know," murmured Grace. "I've heard the name of 'Vesty'—*that* is Vesty."

"That is Vesty," said her companion.

"And you love her, I believe," said Grace Langham to her own breast, but sighed aloud; a gentle, bewitching sigh that divined deeper of Notely's mood than further laughter would have done then.

As they passed out of sight, riches and gay things and the last light of day seemed to go with them.

The mirth the children were having, congratulating Dr. Spearmint on his engagement, sounded crude.

"Nature has done so much for me, you know," he said, with his weak, throbbing vanity, his hand nervously on the blue tie.

Vesty went over to him and put both hands on his head.

The children hushed.

"Here are the pennies for my berries, Uncle Benny," she said quietly. "I've taken just a quart."

"Yes, yes; all right, Vesty. I'm—ahem!—*engaged*, Vesty. Such a bew-tiful——"

Vesty held her hands on his head. "Uncle Benny" (she would never, even to please him, call him Dr. Spearmint), "you must not think of that. She did not mean that. Besides, you have promised to be always a friend to me, don't you remember?—and to lead the children home from school. You know your mother expects"—they glanced up together at the picture—"that you will do what Jesus told you about doing—that about leading the little children home from school. What if one of them should get lost, or hurt? O Uncle Benny!"

"Oh, my!" he gasped. "I didn't think, Vesty,"

tears streaming down his pale but now placid and restored face.

Vesty smiled, standing there. A light crossed her face; she began to sing:

"The road is winding, the road is dark,
Sail away to Galilee!"

. . . . .

Her voice seemed to me, in that dim hour, to take up Uncle Benny and bear him away, with his great hurt, to the breast of his mother, in heaven, to be healed.

He joined her in the chorus, and then they sang together, she modulating sweetly her full, rich tones to his. Her voice made heavenly rapture of Uncle Benny's song:

'There 's a tree I see in Paradise—
Sail away to Galilee.
It 's the beautiful, waiting Tree of Life—
Sail away to Galilee,
Sail away to Galilee,
Put on your long white robe of peace,
And sail away to Galilee."

VI

THIS GREATER LOVE

"How can I approach the girl?" thought Mrs. Garrison. "If I should send word for Vesta Kirtland to come here and see me, Notely would be sure to hear of it; he would wonder; ask questions. If I go down and see her it will provoke endless comment and wonder among those people. I never visit them. There is no other way. Notely takes the Langhams for the day in his boat to-morrow. I will be driven to the Basin. I will ask Vesta indifferently, by the way, to go with me in those woods where I played in childhood, too timid now to walk there alone. They will say, as well as they can express it, that sentiment must be getting fashionable! Never mind. I shall see and talk with the girl. We will see."

Mrs. Garrison alighted from her carriage before she reached Vesty's door.

"Wait here," she said to her coachman. Vesty saw her approach. Off there in the bay, sublimely guarding and making a gateway to its waters, were two little green mountain peaks of islands, just a narrow surge of the waters flowing between; the "Lions," the "Twin Brothers," they were called.

One does not look off daily, from one's very infancy, on such a view for nothing. Mrs. Garrison saw the "lion" in Vesty's quick-divining eyes, and was glad.

"Anything but heart-break and slow consumption. Of battle I am not afraid," she said to herself.

"I took a fancy to leave my carriage and walk a bit among those old trees. I used to know them well. Will you go with me, child?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Garrison." Vesty handed the baby which she was tending to its mother, and walked away with the fine lady.

"Vesta Kirtland," said Mrs. Garrison, as they entered the shadow of the woods, "your face tells me plainly that you know I have some object in asking you to walk with me here. I have.

"I am proud, cold, indifferent regarding you people here; I have not noticed you, hardly even by recognition, if we chanced to meet in the lanes; yes, I know. I bring no personal claims. But"—she was going to say, "you are fond of Notely," but she looked at the girl, and a proud, sarcastic smile curved her lips instead—"my son, Notely Garrison, adores you, I believe? I do not know whether you care for him; I presume not so ardently; but if you were even a little fond of him, for the sake of childhood days when he made you his little playmate—you would try to do the best for his good now—would you not, child?"

Vesty showed so few symptoms of slow consumption, and the lions in the gateway of her soul

glowed so ominously, that Mrs. Garrison concluded to be brief. She turned her face away a little; the operation was unpleasant, and she took out the knife, only in speech.

"Notely has quixotic ideas in many ways: if he had given any ground for a foolish confidence in his boyhood he would hold to it now, against all his life's advancement, filial duty—yes, even against personal inclination, for that matter."

Mrs. Garrison was a resolved surgeon. "Do you know what Notely's prospects are in life—socially, politically, financially? But he must take the tide as it serves. To turn now is to lose all. He has many friends. He is beloved by a rich, beautiful, accomplished girl, influential in that sphere where her family have for so long moved. I seem cruel, child."

"Call me by my name. Call me Vesty Kirtland. I hate you! With my whole heart and soul I hate you!"

So the bold lions at the gate, desperately guarding sea-depths of pain behind.

"Really, Vesta Kirtland! if things were different I would rather be mother-in-law to you than to Grace Langham. You are a pupil worthy of my metal! You are fire, I see. Bravo!"

Vesty stood with her head on her arm, resting against a tree, holding herself.

"I do not know that there is anything more to say. Notely will never seek his own release. But, if you loved him *truly*——"

"I do!"

Flaming scorn and a smile as defiant as Mrs. Garrison's own.

"Do you?" said the surgeon. "Then release him."

"You told a lie. Notely does not want to be released. He loves me, not Grace Langham. You know how it is with men. If I should go to your house and say to him, 'Come with me; come down to my father's house, since there is no other way, and help troll, and haul the traps, and make the nets, and be with me,' he would come!"

"Yes," said the lady, pale, "he would go. Therefore, as I said, do *you* save him."

"What makes that life so much better, out there, than ours, that I should give him up to it, and break my heart and his? Are *you* one that they make?"

"All people do not regard me with such disfavor." She looked at the girl almost wistfully. "Life *is* hard, Vesta, and exacting, spite of all that we can do; and the world is hard and exacting, supercilious, ready to pick at a flaw—you do not know."

"Well, I think Notely will be happier here with me."

Yet one could see the girl's pale resolve, only she was turning the knife a little on the heartless surgeon. It cut sharply.

"For a month or two, Vesta, yes."

"And then?"

"One who has been accustomed to champagne from an ice-cooler will not be satisfied forever with

sucking warm spring water in the sun, however wholesome."

"Ah!"

"He will grow very tired. He will not speak, but he will regret."

"Ah! he will think what he has given up; and it *is* so much, all in all; yes, it is too much!"

Mrs. Garrison turned, startled at the girl's voice. The lions held the gateway, sad and gloomy. Into those heaving depths behind she should not enter.

"You have not told me anything. I only got you to say it over. I had thought it all out for myself. I do not mean, any more, that Notely shall marry me."

Mrs. Garrison gave her a wild glance of gratitude, of sorrow. In that instant her heart yearned intensely over the long-limbed girl, standing so sorrowful and proud, and cut by Fate.

"How will you manage?" she cried impulsively. "He *is* so fond of you!"

"I can manage. Promise me one thing?"

"Anything I have."

Vesty smiled. "Promise me, if Notely should be sick, in danger, I mean, or hurt, unfortunate, it might be—you would let me know, and let me come and care for him, just while he needed care. I want you to promise me!"

Her voice took the sharp tone, her eyes the frenzy, of a bird guarding its young.

"Ah, Vesta Kirtland, you did love him! Oh, I promise."

"If you did not, there 's such a feeling toward him, different from the others, I can't tell; if you did not, and I should ever know, it would be like I had some little child of my own—yes, like I had some poor little baby of my own, crying for me, and I did not come—I did not come!"

Vesty turned. The tide had run so high those wild ocean guards were covered by the surge.

She led the way to the outskirts of the wood and stood aside for Mrs. Garrison to pass. The woman would have drawn near her; she waved her hand, standing aside from her. Mrs. Garrison hesitated. The sight of Dan Kirtland's low, brown cottage, the squalid babies in the doorway, the fishing-nets, Vesty's last week's cotton gown swinging on the line, some humiliating, harsh memories of her own, spurred her on, with a sigh.

"She is fire, thank God! It will be all right," she said.

Vesty drew back into the woods.

She pressed her forehead hard against the rough bark of a tree. To "fall down there, and to be found and taken home and put away beside her own mother in the little home lot by the sea-wall—not to have to stand up wearily any more, and walk back, dazed and sick, into the light"—so she yearned —"what was there to stand up for?"

A pitiful little wail, and "Lowizy's" weary voice trying to sing reached her.

Clouds drifted over the sky. The poplars shivered; no voice of the thrush now chanting from the

wood-depths; but the poplars, that Christ's cross was made from, what soft voice is this of theirs falling? "Love, love, love"—this too? sighing with strange rapture.

Vesty pulled her thick hair down over the bruised place on her forehead. She went out of the woods, toward her father's poor house and the wailing and the feeble singing.

"Vesty! Vesty!" one of the school-children came running toward her. "Lowizy said you was up here. I came to look for you. Here 's a note Jane Pray sent."

DEAR VESTY: You told me last meetun you was comern up to sett with me and my border some evening. Come tonyte. hees a poor erflickted creetur, seems to me. hees lamer 'an ever an smaller 'an ever this week, an' the burth-scalds on his face shows more, seems to me. Ef that he was payin' 3 dollars a week, I should feel easier. bring your soing an' sett a good long spale.

yours truly,

JANE PRAY.

Vesty came, just as the firelight grew welcome and tender. She put aside her hat and shawl, unrolled her parcel of sewing-work, and sat down by the little lamp at one end of the room with Miss Pray.

She took in my presence naturally, with no obtrusive kindness; she was at a necessitous task—putting a broad gray patch, the best available from the

resources at home, on Jimmy Kirtland's brown jacket, doing it deftly with her supple hands.

"You'll be doing that for some boys of your own by and by," said Miss Pray, intending to have a cheerful evening.

Vesty grew sweet and pale; she shook her head. Her dark eye-sockets had a look, I thought, as though she had been ill and fasting. I mused in the firelight.

"And what if that should not be your fate indeed, Vesta Kirtland: not bearing, and toil, and pain, and all the heart-breaking vicissitudes of woman's life, but some peculiar station?

"So tall and gracious, to go robed costly, to ride splendidly accoutred and attended, to condescend almost to *all*, to give gracious *downward* smiles.

"What if they knew the power of wealth and alien rank, for that matter, I held in that miserable, lean, little paw of mine! You should outshine Grace Langham as the sun, Vesty. Some time, if she were wronged and sorrowful, could I point her, delicately, with all forbearance and worship of my own, that way?"

"Be you rebellious?" Unsuccessful in her cheerful attempts with Vesty, Jane Pray had turned to me.

But Vesty resented her companion's question, almost involuntarily turning to me with a quick and awful pity.

(No; I had been lost, dreaming: not that way, surely; not though her heart were moved with the

purest pity angels could bestow; not thou, Vesty, above all, sweet one, beautiful one! to a union so unfit and repelling.)

But I had to bring my thoughts back from a long way to answer Miss Pray's question.

"No," I said. "I settled that with God long ago. It is all right between us."

Miss Pray, confused by Vesty's look, blushed painfully.

"Thank you for asking me about it," I said gently.

At that Miss Pray rose. "Come; le's play words," she said.

So the girl and the woman folded their sewing, and Miss Pray brought from some hitherto unknown recreative source a little box of cardboard letters, and we sat at the table together.

Miss Pray and Vesty thoughtfully selected some letters and shook them together and handed them each to me to make into words. I gave them each a word.

The letters I gave Miss Pray composed a simple and striking feature of the Basin vocabulary, "w-h-a-l-e."

Those I gave Vesty I studied to make a little more difficult, "c-o-n-t-i-n-u-e."

Miss Pray gave me three letters. It happened as I dropped them on the table that they fell of themselves into complete literary sequence, "c-o-w." But Vesty handed me eleven shuffled letters, a ladylike aspiration, and looked at me with a little appealing

blush—the Basin school is so brief, so limited in its curriculum.

Miss Pray put on her glasses and studied wearily and long on her letters, placing them every way. I saw that she had them now at last, "w-h-a-l-e," but was regarding them as blankly as ever.

"Pray do not move them again," I cried hopefully, finding the game more exciting than I had anticipated. "You have it, 'w-h-a-l-e,' whale—see?"

Miss Pray looked shocked and dubious. I saw at once that she was suffering under the sorrowful mental conviction that I had spelled the word wrongly: but that she was resolved not again to wound my feelings. She turned to assist Vesty.

"That," she said at length, struck by some suggestive combination, "might be 'continnu,' Vesty, ef it had more 'n's and no 'e'."

"Oh," said Vesty, pleased and enlightened. "But major knows," she added promptly, "about the spelling."

"I have your word, you see, Vesty," I said. "'S-e-p-p-e-r-a-t-i-o-n.'"

I had it spread out proudly on the table. She looked at me and blushed again. I smiled, only as I would at a priceless child.

"You *are* cute at *guessin'*, major," said Miss Pray admiringly; but I saw that she held me deficient in the classical prearrangement of words, and that the game had lost interest to her on that account. So we laid it by.

When Vesty rose to go home, "I will go with you," I said, wrapping my sad little presence in an overcoat.

Miss Pray looked as she had when she asked me if I was rebellious.

But Vesty said quickly: "I wish you would. I am so afraid in the dark!"

Afraid in the dark! Not she; but this was some ointment for that unconscious thrust Miss Pray had given.

I walked home with her. Coming back, there was ever a slight crackling in the bushes and stealthy breathing behind me. It was the lad, Jimmy Kirtland, sent by Vesty surreptitiously to see that I arrived safely at Miss Pray's.

I regarded sacredly this innocent device, but, arrived in the house, I heard Jimmy outside pleading cautiously to Miss Pray through the window that he was afraid to go back alone.

Miss Pray tried to arouse one of her two orphans —her help: for answer they screamed aloud, sinking back into a sleep deep with snores of utter repose.

"Sh! sh!" she said. "I'll go home with you, Jimmy."

I had not taken off my great-coat. I went out of my room and followed them, unseen. In sight of the Kirtland home-light Jimmy ran in, glad. Miss Pray turned to face the darkness alone; she went a few paces, stopped, hesitated, and began to weep softly.

"I am here to walk home with you, Miss Pray," I said. "Come; I can see very well in the dark."

"Thank God!" said she, and came toward me with a little bound; for it seemed that it did not make any difference to her in this emergency that I did not know how to spell.

VII

"SETTIN' ON THE FENCE"—THE SHIFTY SPECTRE

"ADMIRAL 'S I SUMS-IT-UP," collector of road-taxes, a title cheerfully accorded him through the genial courtesy of the Basin, came down from the Point.

In the distance we could hear him approaching as usual, the passionless monotone of his voice growing ever nearer and more distinct, as he flapped methodically first one rein, then the other, over the unhurried action of his horse, sagely admonishing him to "G'long! ye old fool! Git up! ye old skate!"

His mortal conversation, too, though cutting and profound, was, in the deepest sense, without rancor or emotion.

"'S I sums it up," said he, "yer road down through the woods 's gittin' more ridick'lous 'n ever."

"Poo! poo! Wouldn't be afraid to bet ye she ain't," said Captain Pharo Kobbe, with glowing pipe.

"Ye seem to boast yerselves t ye don't belong to nothin' down here," continued the admiral; "but ye does. Ye belongs to a shyer town. Ye orter have some pride. 'S I sums it up, be you goin' to pay yer rates, or work 'em out mendin' yer roads?"

"I've noticed pretty darned well 't I don't belong to no town, only when it comes to votin' some on ye into offis' up there and payin' taxes," said one of the Basin group—Captain Dan Kirtland, Vesty's father. "I ain't a-goin' to pay no rates, nor work 'em out on no roads neither. When I goes I goes by boat, 'n' I didn't see, when I was out pollockin' this mornin', but what the water 's jest as smooth as she ever was!"

A low murmur of sympathetic laughter ran through the group.

"I goes by boat—when I goes," said Captain Leezur benignantly. "She *is* smoother, sartin she is. But some, ye know, 's never sartisfied. Some neow 's all'as shiftin' a chaw o' tobackker——"

"Comparin' of the road with the water," said Captain Rafe, father of Fluke and Gurdon, "I permits it to ye all that thar' ain't that steadiness about the land that thar' is about the water. Thar 's a kind o' a weaviness and onsartainty about the land."

"'S I sums it up," said the imperturbable collector, grave pipe of expired ashes in mouth, "thar 's some bottom to the water, but it 's purty nigh fell out o' yer roads down here. Ye're a disgrace to a shyer town."

Loud and unoffended laughter from the group.

"I permits 't thar 's some advantages about the land," continued Captain Rafe. "I wants ter go out and shute me a mess o' coots once in a while, and ketch me a mess o' brook-trout, but as for tinkerin' over the roads—why, that artis' that was down here

three months las' summer, paintin' a couple o' Leezur's sheep eatin' rock-weed off'n a nubble, said 't our roads was picturusque. You don't suppose I'm goin' around a-shorin' up and sp'ilin' the picturusque, do ye?"

Inextinguishable laughter from the group. At this juncture Captain Shamgar came up with his cows.

"Ain't ye drivin' yer cows home ruther early, Shamgar? Sun 's a-p'intin' 'bout tew in the arternoon."

"Wal, yes, but I got through cuttin' weir-stays, and thought 's the cows was over there, I'd take 'em along home with me. Save goin' back arter 'em by 'n' by, ye know."

Captain Shamgar disposed himself on the fence, and the cows fell to browsing in the lane.

"Got your road-tax ready for the adm'r'l, Shamgar?"

"Sartin, sartin," said that individual, firmly and permanently buttressing his cowhide boots between the rails; "charge 'er to the town pump, and take 'er out o' the handle!"

Uproarious laughter.

"You'd orter see the roads in Californy," said a dark spectre with shifty eyes on the outskirts of the group.

"Gold, ain't they, Pershal?"

"No, no," said the spectre modestly; "jest common silver-leavin's. Arfter they've made silver dollars they scrape up all the cornder pieces and leavin's, and heave 'em out into the road. They

wears down smooth in a little while—and shine? Wal——"

"Speakin' o' coots," firmly interposed Captain Dan Kirtland, "onct when I was cruisin' to Boston, I seen a lot o' coots hangin' up thar' in the market 't looked as though they'd been hangin' thar' ever senct before Adam cut his eye-teeth. 'How long be you goin' to keep them coots?' says I. 'Coots!' says he; 'them 's converse-back ducks.' 'Converse-back ducks!' says I; 'them 's coots,' says I, 'and they're gittin' to be *old* coots too,' says I. 'You come from Maine, I guess, don't ye?' says he. 'Never mind whether I come from Maine or whether I come from Jaffy,' says I, 'I come from sech a quarter of this 'arth as whar' coots is jest *coots*,' says I."

"Ye'd orter see the coots in Californy," wailed the voice of the shifty spectre on the outskirts.

"Kind o' resemblin' cows in size, ain't they, Pershal?"

"No, no; the biggest I ever seen was the size o' Shamgar's tom-turkey; but plenty? Wal——"

"Speakin' o' Jaffy," said Captain Leezur; "somebody was tellin' me 't they'd heered how 't Lot's wife—she that was turned into a pillar o' salt, ye know——"

"Ye'd orter see the hunks o' salt in Californy!" moaned triumphantly the spectre.

"Had got up and went!" joyfully concluded Captain Leezur.

"Wal, now, speakin' o' trout (I permits that they have termenjus trout in Californy," wisely subjoined

Captain Rafe), "larst Sunday I was startin' for Shadder Brook with my pole and line, and I met this noospaper man's wife, 't's boardin' up to Lunette's. She was chopped down so small tow'ds the waist line, looked as ef, ef she sh'd happen to get ketched in a nor'wester, she'd go clean in tew. Didn't bear no more resemblance to your Vesty, Dan, than a hourglass on the shelf does to the nateral strompin' figger o' womankind (I permits the women has splendid figgers in Californy).

"'Wal,' says she to me, and sighs. 'I wish 't there was a chapel to this place,' says she. 'I know,' says I; 'I've all'as said, ef they'd start 'er up I'd contribbit to 'er—'s fur as my purse 'u'd allow.'"

Exhaustive laughter for some cause from the group.

"'Do you think it 's right to go a-fishin' Sunday?' says she. 'No, marm,' says I, 'not big fish, but little treouts?' says I; 'won't you jest think it over, marm?' says I. And while she was thinkin' I kind o' shied and sidled off, an' got away outer the ship's channel."

"Wal, thar' neow," said Captain Leezur, beaming with fond sympathy at the heavens, "sech folks dew help to parss away the time, amazin'."

"'S I sums it up," said the impassively listening collector, "ef ye don't pass away some o' yer time on yer roads down here, ye'll break some o' yer d—d necks."

Renewed unresentful laughter from the group.

"Grarsshoppers, neow," said Captain Leezur, seriously and reflectively, "makes better treoutin' bait 'n angle-worms (I know 't we don't have no sech grarsshoppers nor angle-worms neither as they dew in Californy).

"Nason was over t'other day, helpin' me shingle my barn. 'Twas a dreadful warm day, and we was takin' our noonin' arfter dinner, settin' thar' on the log, 'nd there was a lot o' these 'ere little green grarsshoppers hoppin' areound in the grarss: so arfter a spall, we speared up some on 'em and——"

"'S I sums it up, ef ye want to stay here and ketch the last fish 't God ever made, 'ste'd o' bracin' up and mendin' yer roads and takin' yer part in a shyer town, ye must do so."

"Sho!" said Captain Leezur, regarding him with wistful compassion; "I hain't seen as fish was gittin' skeerce."

By winks and insinuations of niggardliness, through Captain Rafe, father of Fluke, he was moved to take a nervine lozenge out of his pocket and display it temptingly before the sapient, immovable countenance of the collector. The latter, cold pipe in mouth, solemnly shook his head.

"They *dew* come kind o' high, I know," said Captain Leezur, "but I'm all'as willin' to sheer 'em with a friend. I ain't one o' that kind that 's all'as peerin' anxiously into the futur'."

"The furderest time 't I ever looked into the futur'," said Captain Dan Kirtland, "was once when I was a boy 'bout nineteen, and my father told me

not to take the colt out. He was a stallion colt (I know 't we don't have no sech colts here as they do in Californy), jest three years and two months old, and sperrited—oh, no; I guess he wa'n't sperrited none! Wal, my father was gone one day, and I tackled him up and off I went. Might 'a' fetched up all right, but 't happened jest as I was passin' by them smoke-houses to Herrinport, some boys 't was playin' with a beef's blawder had hove her up onto the roof, and she bounded down right atween that stallion's ears and eyes. In jest about one second I looked so far into the futur' that I run my nose two inches into the 'arth, and she 's been broke ever since."

"Never mind, Kirtland, she 's all thar'. The furderest time 't I ever looked ahead," said the voice of Shamgar, "was once in war time. Flour fifteen dollars a barrel, seven girls and five boys (I know 't we don't raise no sech families here as they do in Californy), everything high. All to once the thought come to me, 'Mebbe herrin'll be high tew.' And sure enough herrin' was high!"

"The furderest time 't I ever looked ahead——" deliciously began Captain Leezur.

"G'long! ye old fool! Git up! ye old skate!" Admiral 'S I Sums-it-up was turning his horse about.

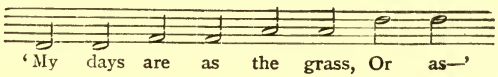
"I believe you and me 's got a bet on, ain't we, adm'r'l?" said Captain Pharo.

"I told 'em 'twas wastin' waggin ile to come down here to c'lect. G'long! ye old fool! Git

up! ye old skate! 'S I sums it up, bet ye, goin' 'tween here and the Point I could scrape twenty-five pound o' mud off 'n yer kerridge time ye gits thar', Kobbe. G'long! ye old fool! Git up! ye old skate!"

His unbaffled monotone grew gradually faint in the distance.

"Roads *be* all porridge up there a piece, I reckon," chuckled Captain Pharo; "but as long as Crooked River runs, I don't calk'late to lose no bet. Poo! poo!



"Jest give me time," beamed Captain Leezur, sounding mellifluously, "'n' I can row any Pointer ashore in an argyment 't ever was born yit. I takes a moderate little spall to dew it in. Forced-to-go——"

"Ye be a lazy, yarn-reelin' set, all on ye," said Captain Rafe, grinning with affection and delight on the group. "I'm going to have ye all posted and put on the teown!"

Murmurs of rich and deep laughter.

A tall, dark form, shifty-eyed, had been insensibly moving and disintegrating me from the group. I found myself drifting strangely ever farther and farther away. I was sitting beside him on a rock in the covert of the woods, the sun setting over the bay, and all was still save his voice.

"I went to Californy minding" (mining), said he. "She ain't nothin' so wonderful of a State as you

might think: she ain't no bigger 'n Maine 'n' New York and Alabamy, 'n' Afriky 'n' Bar Harbor all put into one!"

"Great heavens!" said I, scratching my feeble little cane into the earth, "is she that?"

Of all that had been denied him in the recent general conversation, of colossal hunks of salt, of grasshoppers "no larger than Dorking hens," of fishes, women, horses fabulous, I listened, rapt with wonder and admiration.

The sun went down, the moon arose, and still I listened. I was not weary, I was not hungry; I was absorbed in sincere and awful attention. But the world is callous and cold, and I shall not repeat those tales.

The world is callous and cold; but, as the shifty spectre at last pointed me, unwilling, homeward, he murmured, with tears in his eyes: "I never found sech an intellergent listener as you be—not in the whole length and breadth of Californy."

VIII

"VESTY 'S MARRIED"

"Vesty 's married Gurd! Vesty 's gone and got married to Gurd!" said the children, big and joyful with news, on their way to school.

Yes, that was what she had done! I leaned heavily for a moment where I stood. That was Vesty!

Oh, child-madness! Sweet, lost child! Oh, pity of the world! and I crawling on with such a hurt; I did not think that should have wrung me so.

I was getting near her door; not anywhere else could I have gone. She would be at the Rafes' cottage now—so easily do the Basin brides move, without wedding journey or trousseau.

The wash-tubs and cooking-stove stood at one end of the long, low-raftered room, the cabinet organ and violins at the other. Captain Rafe and the boys were out, hauling their sea-traps, and Vesty had been doing the washing that they were wont to do for themselves; the mother, like her own, being dead.

The room was nice as I had never seen it before, and Vesty was putting some pitiful little ornaments to rights at the cabinet-organ end.

She turned to me with so strange and febrile a

look, yet with so wild and startled a welcome in her eyes.

"Hush!" I said. "You wanted me, child; I am here."

I saw that she had turned to lean against the organ, and that she was shaken with sobs.

"What have you done, Vesty? Wicked and false beyond any woman I know—*you!*"

"Have you seen him?" she sobbed.

"No, I have not seen Notely. You were married only last night."

"I wrote to him. There was only one way to save Notely from marrying me—only one way."

"You might have waited."

"Notely would never have waited. Notely meant to marry me."

"You should have married him, and not been false."

"I would rather be false than ruin Notely."

"You thought that it would ruin him? You had some assistance in that belief; his lady mother came to see you; the property is hers. If he transgresses, no property, no wealthy Grace Langham, no easy glory at the bar or in the state. What were those to your love, Vesty?"

She looked up, dim, and shook her head.

"You have done a wilful, blind, impetuous thing You were piqued, proud, angry, and so you gave yourself, body and soul, to this mad leap."

"I don't care for my body (sob) or soul (sob) if Notely isn't sick."

"There is One who is above Notely, to punish as well as to pity, Vesty."

"God"—very softly—"oh, yes!" The bewildered, grief-tormented eyes looked faith into mine. "I didn't mean that. I asked Him. I could only find one way. He won't let Notely come to harm, but help him to make the best of himself."

"Your lover is a brave man. He would not have been selfish toward you as this great hulk, Gurdon. He knew you intelligently. He would have lifted, considered, cared for you."

Vesty held herself aloft, pale. "Gurdon is good. If any one ever asked Gurd for anything he always gave it to them."

I leaned my head on my hand, my heart leaping.

Vesty came near me. "Tell me that you do not think it is a great mistake—such a great—a lost—mistake; for Notely's sake, tell me! I looked so for you to come. I wanted you."

To have touched one thread of her dark hair, bowed there before me! I did not touch her.

"Ah, the mistake!" I said; "ah, the pity of it! You do not tell me how *you* have suffered, Vesty; how your own heart has been torn."

She took my hand, and, turning her head, pushed it gently away from her, as some blind instrument of torture.

"The last time I heard you sing, Vesty, you put your hands on Uncle Benny's poor, confused head and soothed and guided him. Who was there to help or guide you, motherless child, confused and lost?"

"Could *you* have seen the way?" How she entreated me!

"No one sees the way. But a broken heart and a life—misguided and lost though it be—*given.*"

She looked up, dim, again.

"You will make them happy here," I added. Ah, that she understood! She looked about the room with a sad, brave pride, and rose and stood again, a striking picture there.

"They *did* need me," she said; "*he* needed me more than Notely. And I shall get time, besides, to go over to father's and help with the children."

I nodded. "Oh, it is bravely done," I said. "We shall get on." For she was worn from her long mental struggle, and nearly wild in those dark-circled eyes. "There will be no more feathers in Captain Rafe's cake. Did I tell you? He and the boys invited me here to tea. They had been dressing birds and baking in the same morning. The plum cake was full of feathers, Vesty."

She laughed, and looked at me with shocked gratitude because I had made her laugh.

"Not chopped or sugared feathers, Vesty, but whole winged feathers of the natural flavor."

"Oh!" she said, "shouldn't you think they needed me?"

"Infinitely."

"Wait. Won't you come—come and see me often? Come evenings and hear the boys play—they *can* play!—and tell me"—her hands trembled—"tell me about Notely!" Her soul bare in her uplifted eyes.

Only to one as a wraith, a shadow, out of the ordinary pale of humanity, could she have looked like that!

"Always, whatever I hear or know," I answered her. "Gurdon will not be jealous of *me*." I smiled at her.

She smiled back in her dim way. "Jealous?" she said. "What! after we are married?"

"Ay, surely! The Basins are true to each other then always."

"That is the way," she said.

"That is the way," I said, and left her.

When Notely Garrison received the letter that Vesty had written him he read at the end: "When you get this I shall be married;" and the "for love of you, Notely, God knows that! You must make the most of all He gives you." Notely seemed to see her eyes.

Then he lost them and went down into a mental gulf. He locked himself in his room, to be ever alone; thoughts came to him that he could not bear: he rose and filled a glass twice with brandy and drained it. He ran his hand through the tumbled light hair that Vesty had so loved, and reeled out of the room with a laugh on his lips and a flush on his face.

"Mother, I have lost my girl!"

"O Notely! however mistaken I have been, what have I loved, whom have I loved in all this world but you, my child? Do not break my heart!"

"No, no, mother!" said Notely, going and standing beside her; "I am your natural—natural—protector."

As he stood thus, looking out with his drunken yet bright and tender eyes, the child of her breast whom she had robbed, she laid her head on his shoulder and began to cry. "Why, mother!" he said, almost sobered for the instant. Never had this son seen this mother weep. He led her to a lounge.

"I think," he said, struggling for thought very seriously; he racked his stormy, fuddled brain for what would most please her. "Now, when shall we have a wedding, mother? Grace—Grace Langham."

"O Notely!" She tried to detain him with her hand.

"I'll go—go ask her," he said. He passed out with an easy exaggeration of his usual lordly air, debonair and high, and at the same time genial.

Grace was alone in the arbor, in her favorite hammock, with a book, when Notely came up.

The look she gave him was full of amusement and anger and disgust.

These qualities somehow attracted him now. He was a gentleman; he tried to hold himself very erect against the trellis, and put the question delicately.

"Light—light—light of my soul!" he said.

Grace threw down her book and screamed. Then she put her hands over her face and fell to crying.

Notely took out his handkerchief and wiped his own eyes with the choicest deliberation of sympathy.

"All—all seem to be weeping to-day," he said.

"Oh, you wretch! you brute! you brute!" cried Grace.

Notely, though much flattered, continued diplomatically mopping his eyes.

At length he desisted; and Grace, looking out and seeing his keen, handsome profile staring out so desolately, came down from the hammock.

She shivered a little; drunken men were horrid, even dangerous. But Notely! She came up heroically and put her hand on his sleeve.

"There is one condition, Notely, on which I can—consider your proposal."

"Name," said Notely, with touching legal precision, "condition on which you'll marry me."

"You must never, never drink like this again. I did not know that you ever did this. Oh, how it has hurt me!" The lace fell back from her white arms, there was a perfume of flowers about her; bright brown eyes are lovelier when suffused with tears.

"Thanks!" said Notely, meaning to come up to the full measure of the occasion. "I'm not—not worthy. No—no—no previous engagement, how'ver."

But he was so gentle, she took his arm and led him in. Mrs. Langham, who always spoiled him, entering stately in silk and gems, engaged him in a game of cribbage, humoring gravely all his startling and original vagaries in the game.

"What does it mean?" cried Grace to Mrs. Garrison.

"It was an accident, not an excess, my child," said the mother, smiling proudly. "It should never be mentioned in connection with my son; it is no part of *him*."

Mrs. Garrison was strangely assured in her own heart that Vesty Kirtland would never tell the son of his mother's visit to her. She did not mean that Grace Langham should ever know the full cause that had unsettled him.

"We must be very tender with him, keep near to him," she said, "or, when he recovers, he may do himself harm, with remorse, and—the fear of losing your love, Grace."

They were very tender with him. And by good chance, too, the post brought a famed "Review," copying entire the brilliant fellow's essay on "American Politics," with the editor's comment of "masterly."

"See!" screamed Grace; "it says 'masterly.'"

"Of course it 's mast—mast—masterly," said Notely, his beautiful eyes burning.

They drove with him, the stout coachman perched for safety on the seat beside him. At evening he tried to catch Grace in the arbor and kiss her. She screamed and escaped.

"Come, dearest!" said his mother. She left the door wide between his sleeping-room and hers, and laid the triumphant review at his hand for his waking in the morning.

But on the morrow he was neither remorseful nor subdued, though his eyes were hollow. He smoked

a great deal, and sang melancholy, unembarrassed snatches of song, after the manner of Captain Pharo, and made love to Grace, who was beautiful.

At evening he tucked his violin under his arm. "I am going down to call on the new Basin bride," he said, with airy, cheerful contempt for that class.

His mother paled. He went up to her and kissed her. "Do not fear, mother," he whispered.

The boys welcomed him somewhat eagerly. He had been their teacher on the violin, as well as the original donor of those beloved instruments. And they had thought he might not come to that house again.

"I've a new tune for you, boys," he said. Vesty came in. He rose and bowed, taking her hand. "I congratulate the new bride!" He would not look at her pallor or her great beseeching eyes.

"I've this to show you, boys, that I've been practising to-day." He had not touched the strings for forty-eight hours! There was a covert smile, sad, playful, not malicious, on his face as his hands touched them now.

Where he had been "practising" indeed! From what source he had got that music that he played for them now! He would never play the like again.

"Bah!" said he, at the close, with his old cheerful manner; "it is too sad! When one is possessed only for minor strains better cease fiddling. Do you want me to break this, or throw it into the fire when I get home, Gurdon? Then take her, lad! She 's a fine one, finer than yours. Take her in all good faith. Come!"

Gurdon reached out his hand, hesitating, voiceless pity in his honest eyes.

Notely sat and listened to the others; applauded in the old way. "You are beyond my teaching, lads," he said—and they played exquisitely. "You excel your master now. Well, well, my mellow old fiddle is better here with you." But he would never once look at Vesty, so pale and beseeching.

As he passed out Vesty started impulsively, then looked at her husband.

"Go and speak to him, Vesty," said Gurdon. "Maybe he wanted to speak with you a moment."

Vesty stepped out into the dark, and she called, almost in a breathless voice: "Notely!"

"Ah!" He came back.

She held out her hands to him. "Forgive me, Notely! I meant it for your—I meant——"

He took her hands firmly in his and pressed his lips down to hers. "My wife!" he said, slowly and solemnly; "my wife!" and dropped her hands and left her.

She stepped back through the doorway, sobbing.

"Was he angry with you, Vesty?" her husband said.

"No! no!"

"Did he say as he was still fond of you, or anything like that?" said the bold brother Fluke.

"Nay! nay!" said Gurdon. "Vesty 's married now: nor Vesty nor he would ever have word like that."

IX

THE TALE OF CAPTAIN LEEZUR'S SLY COURTSHIP

It has not been a seven months, surely, since I heard the roar of those waters down in the Basin's Greater Bay!

Captain Leezur has not been housed through icy snow-fall and winter blast!—nay, he has been ever there, as when I left him sitting on the log, beaming, tranquil heir of eternity.

"Ilein' my saw, ye see," said he, springing up and grasping my hand; "ef I remembers right, I was settin' here ilein' my saw, when ye come and bid me good-by?"

"You were."

"And here I be, right in the same place, ilein' of 'er ag'in!" he cried, struck with joyful surprise at such a phenomena of coincidence. "Set deown! why, sartin ye must! I carn't let ye go."

Oh, the taste, sweeter than ancient wine, of that nervine lozenge once more! The time was weary while I was away. Now that I am back again, it seems as nothing.

"Some neow 's all'as runnin' their saw right through everythin', no marter heow hard she wrarstles and complains ag'in' it. But when mine gives

the first squeak, I sets right deown with 'er and examines of 'er, and then I takes a swab-cloth and I swabs her. Forced-to-go—'specially ef she ain't iled—never gits far, ye know."

O delicious sound of uncorrupted philosophy once more!

Mrs. Leezur came out to welcome me, and sat on the doorstep near. She was chopping salt codfish in a tray for dinner. When her knife struck a bone, she put on her glasses, and after deliberate and kindly research extracted it.

"Did ye hear anything from Jaffy?" said the mellow, glad voice of Captain Leezur.

"I'm inclined to think what you heard was true, captain. It seems to be confirmed from every source; she is gone."

"Thar' neow! I told 'em 't you'd make inquiries. I could see, says I, when I was talkin' to him 'beout it, 't he'd got waked up to more 'n common interest in the subjec'. Wal, I'm glad on 't; she'd sot there so long neow—didn't ye hit a bone then, mother? Seounded kind o' as though ye struck a bone, but mebbe 'twas only the bottom o' the tray."

"We've been threatenin' to clean dooryard," said Mrs. Leezur, looking about on a scene that demanded no more particular explanation.

"Thar' 's three times," said Captain Leezur, "that I've had them bresh 'n' things all hove up into piles, 'n' every time the wind 's raked in and swep' 'em areound all over the farmimunt ag'in."

"Perhaps, father," said Mrs. Leezur, in a mildly suggestive tone, as far from sarcasm as heaven is from earth; "perhaps, if 't when you'd got 'em up in piles, you'd keeried of 'em off, they wouldn't 'a' got swep' areound ag'in."

"Wal, I don' know 's they would, mother; but it 's been a dreadful busy time o' year, ye know," said Captain Leezur, mellifluously. "Didn't ye strike a bone then, mother? Seounded 's though ye run afoul of a bone, but mebbe, arfter all, 'twas only the bottom o' the tray."

"I like the yard," I said. "I wouldn't like to miss those—things."

"I guess you're kind o' like that artis' that was here, 't was so keeried away with the picturusque. He run afeoul o' a couple o' old sheep o' mine up on the headlan's somewheres, an' spent a 'tarnal three months a-paintin' of 'em deown onto some canvarss. I told 'im, says I, 'Thar'!' says I, 'I'm glad to see them sheep put somewheres 't they'll stay,' says I. 'It'll be the first time in existence 't they hain't broke fence,' says I. 'I'm r'a'ly obleeged to ye. I hain't seen the livin' presence o' them sheep senct I don't know when,' says I. 'I've been a-threatenin' these tew years t' go and hunt em up, but the glimpst I've had o' 'em in this 'ere pictur'll dew jest as well,' says I; 'fur 's I can see, they look promisin', an' gettin' better points 'n ever for light-weight jumpers,' says I——Sartin ye hit a bone then, mother! Thar'! I told ye so. Heave 'er eout. I knowed 't you'd fotch 'er, mother. Did I

ever tell ye," said Captain Leezur to me, "heow sly I was when I went a-courtin'?"

"No," said I. Mother Leezur's face was modest, yet all beautifully alight.

"Wal neow," said Captain Leezur seriously, "my experience has been, there ain't nothin' so onpleasant, when ye're eatin' picked-up codfish, 's to feel the rufe o' yer mouth all runnin' in afeoul along o' a mess o' bones.

"So 't when it got at an age and a time 't I was goin' courtin', I was jest as sly abeout it as could be, 'nd I never let on nothin' o' what port in pertick'lar I was steerin' for.

"So 't I was up settin' a spall with Tryphosy Rogers—she 't was; 'nd says she, 'Neow what shall I get for tea, Leezur?' (The gals all made a great deal on me in them days.) 'They ain't nothin' I likes so well,' says I, 'as a mess o' codfish mixed up along o' eggs and thickenin'.' Wal, she flew 'reound 'nd got supper, 'nd we sot deown together—and I swan! ef that 'ar mess o' codfish 't Tryphosy heaped onto my plate wa'n't worse tangled up with bones 'n the maze o' human destiny.

"Wal, I knew 't Tryphosy had bo's enough; 'nd all ain't so pertick'lar abeout codfish, ye know, as some be. So 't I didn't trouble 'er to get up no more teas for me.

"'Nd still I kep' sly: they hadn't nobody the least idee o' what port I was steerin' for. I tried four or five jest in the same way, but they hadn't moderation enough o' dispersition, ye see, to set

deown beforehand and have a calm previous wrarstlin' o' the spirit along o' them codfish bones.

"Wal, Leony Rogers—she 't was—cousin to Tryphosy—she was called the harndsomest gal in them parts, 'nd I had considerable hopes. So 't when she asts me, 'Neow what'll ye have for tea, Leezur?'—'They ain't nothin' I likes so well,' says I, ' 's a mess o' codfish mixed up along o' eggs and thickenin'.'

"Wal, we sot deown together, 'nd she was so purty I stowed away a mouthful, hardly thinkin'—'nd I run one o' these here main off-shutes from the backbone of a ten-pound cod, abeout tew inches up into the shrouds 'n' riggin' o' my left-hand upper jaw.

"I was in sech a desp'rit agerny to git home that night I got onto Leony's father's old white mar', 't was feedin' along by the road, an' puttin' of 'er deown the hill, I'm dumed ef she didn't stumble and hove me clean over her bows——"

"Father!"

"Wal, mother?"

"Ye swore, father!"

"Wal, thar'! mebbe I did, mother. But ye know when I jined the church forty year ago, there was a kind o' takkit agreement atween Parson Roe 'n' me 't I could sweer when I was tellin' that pertick'lar story.

"Wal, the rute o' the matter was, 't as soon 's I was healed up inter some shape ag'in, I went and see Phoeby Hamlin—she 't was."

No need for personal explanation. Captain Leezur's tone! Mother Leezur's softly shrouded eyes!

"'What'll ye have for tea, Leezur?' says she. 'They ain't nothin' I likes so well,' says I, ''s a mess o' codfish mixed up along o' eggs and thickenin'.' Wal, Phoeby, she went eout, and she was gone a long time—looked kind o' 's though I was gittin' into port.

"'Nd thar I sot and sot; 'nd every minute 't I sot there I was gittin' surer somehow 't I was sightin' land. By 'n' by, Phoeby, she comes in, and we sot deown together, 'nd I kep' takin' one help arfter another; for arfter what I'd been through I was goin' to make sure whether I'd got inter safe harbor or not. But deown she all went, slick as ile, an' nary bone nor sign o' bone anywheres.

"'Phoeby,' says I, 'ye've wrarstled, and ye've conquered!' 'What on 'arth d'ye mean, Leezur?' says she. For figgeral language, ye know, requires a very moderate dispersition; and women, even the moderatest on 'em, haves tew quick perceptions for t' be entertained long with figgeral language."

X

A CALL FROM NOTELY'S YACHT

"Why did you never come? I sent for you."

"I was afraid, Vesty, that new burden of motherhood, which you carried, might take some physical mark or blight from a presence like mine. But he is beautiful!"

He lay upon her arm, and he was beautiful, full fed from her breasts, formed large and fair, his hair already waved as by a court barber! Her eyes rested on him. Would all the weak and miserable of the world be well-nigh forgotten now? She raised them to me again—Basin eyes—all the weak and miserable of the world were dearer.

"He looks that proud way," she laughed, "when the boys play him to sleep; they played him to sleep again before they went to their traps this morning. They used to play me to sleep, before baby came. I used to think of so many things. I wanted to see you."

"Things cannot ever be thought out, after all, Vesty; but if the boys can play one to sleep—well that is best."

She took my hand; the tenderness in her eyes covered their pity. I felt no sting. "I feel safe when

you will come sometimes," she said; "you are so strong—so strong!" She touched my hand admonishingly; it was as though she lifted me.

"I misjudged your husband, Vesty; rather, I did not know him. He is a good lad, this Gurdon."

"Oh, he is!" A dream swept over her face, as dreams will; the mad birds whistling "love" down by the sea-wall, the gay waters flashing—Notely Garrison.

"And so the father plays him to sleep? Many a duke would give half his possessions for a boy like that!"

She buried her face rapturously beside him for a moment, then turned to me calmly:

"What do you know of Notely?" she said.

"Only what rumor knows, what may have been told you. His wife found no enduring attractions in this locality, you know: they have built a summer place at Bar Harbor; his wife and his mother and Mrs. Langham, it is said, are all devoted to his happiness. He has a fine yacht now, and is sometimes seen skipping by off shore. He is gifted in address and with the pen. His name is seen often."

Vesty listened hungrily.

"Have you seen him? Is he happy?"

"I saw him only as he was passing me, with some of his companions; they had come ashore to see the old Garrison place. He looked very happy."

"Then I am glad!" said Vesty of the Basins, clasping her hands. I looked at her; if he was happy she was utterly glad.

"He will be a great man," she said: "he is already famous, that *is* to be great."

"As Christ went down the Lonesome Road,"

sang Uncle Benny, who was voluntary housekeeper at Vesty's during some hours of the day, while the father and boys were away at the fishing:

"As Christ went down the Lonesome Road—
Sail away to Galilee.
He left the Crown and He took the Cross!
Sail away to Galilee.
Sail away to Galilee—
Oh, He left the Crown and He took the Cross—
Sail away to Galilee!"

He came forward to take the baby, who had awakened before he began to sing. The Basin matrons ran in very much, but there was no "Vesty" to enter and take the continued care, in this case, until the young mother should be strong again.

"You can sweep up, major," said Uncle Benny, cheerfully pointing me to the broom.

"Sail away to Galilee,
Sail away to Galilee—"

he sang, walking so proudly with the infant that his gait was most innocently jaunty and affected.

Vesty laughed and shook her head at me, but I had the broom and was hobbling about at work with it, pleased to find that Uncle Benny had rather neglected this humble office for the more important one of minding the baby.

He next set me to washing the dishes and turning the churn; he would not trust me with the child,

and wisely. That he held in his own strong arms, but he sat down beside me after my work was done and gently commiserated me.

"Nature has not done so much for you as she has for some, you know," he said.

"No, indeed," I murmured.

At that he took off his blue necktie and held it toward me, with a tear of pity in his eye.

I took it and tied it simply around my neck above the collar.

"It improves you—some," he said, but his look only too plainly indicated that there was still much to be desired.

We were sitting thus on the doorstep, Uncle Benny with the baby, and I peeling the potatoes, with his blue ribbon tied around my neck, when I heard a half-familiar little scream and laugh, and, looking up, beheld a fashionable company.

"We hailed Gurdon, off Reef Island, and he said we might come and see the son and heir—hurrah!"

Notely spoke in his gay voice, but the look he gave Vesty's child—Vesty's sweet self in that form—leaped with a passionate pain.

There was a small, brilliant-looking woman beside him, with eye-glasses. "O you divine infant!" she exclaimed, regarding the child. "Where is the Madonna?"

Now, I was purposely gathering up the potato peelings very slowly from the doorway, so that the "Madonna" might have time to take down a certain blue sack from the bedpost at hand, and put it on, and

give those little finger-touches to the hair that women covet; so I stumbled over the peelings and got mixed up with them, until even Uncle Benny felt called upon to apologize for me.

"He looks *some* better," he said dubiously, touching his neck: "but," he continued, in a very soft and confidential tone, "Nature has not done so much for him as she has for some, you know."

All the party had the air of having just had a very merry luncheon on board the yacht.

By the side of Notely's bride was one of the handsomest young athletes, almost as handsome as Fluke and Gurdon Rafe.

"What-th—what-th the admithion?" he whispered to Grace, plunging his hand in among the coin in his pockets; "ith—ith there any more of the thame kind inthide?"

"Hush!" said she quickly, for she knew that I had heard. She lifted a hand impulsively toward his mouth: he caught her hand and looked as though he would have held it; she drew it away, blushing sweetly, and sighed, as she had sighed at Notely.

Vesty saw that, as they entered; saw Notely enter with his easy, unobservant swagger, lest the unexpected visit of this fashionable company should embarrass her. He walked across the room, humming an air, to his old violin.

He touched a strain or two. "Do you remember, Vesty," he said airily, drawing nearer, "this?—and this? You have such a beautiful little boy, Vesty! I am so glad!—so glad! And this?—do you remem-

ber?" He played as though he could play away the pallor from that tender face upon the pillows; the pitiful, fine little blue sack added to it. I had left the dust-pan loaded with its spoils, the ragged handle, as I now perceived, not quite hidden behind the door: it caught on to the skirts of the brilliant lady with the eye-glasses, and went trailing loudly after her along the floor. As I stooped down to detach it, sheltered behind those fine draperies, I gave Vesty such a side glance that a smile and color came over her face in spite of herself.

"Such power of attraction!" said Notely, turning to the lady his laughing eyes, with that unconscious pathos which a lovely woman never failed to discover in them; "even the dust-pans"—he swept the strings of the violin—"even the dust-pans become attached to you."

"On the contrary," said she, giving him a sharp glance which he relished from her very bright though near-sighted eyes; "it is not often that I have become attached to anything so useful."

He laughed with mettlesome good-nature.

The bride, with her attendant brave, had gone up to Uncle Benny and the baby.

"Let me take him," she said, holding up her beautiful arms.

Uncle Benny smiled at her, half remembering her —it was an old joke, his becoming engaged to every pretty woman he met—but shook his head.

"It 's a particular trust," he said, in his very soft, sweet voice; "from Jesus Christ and mother. What

if somebody should drop him, or hurt him? I have to be very careful, for it 's a trust.

"'There 's a tree I see in Paradise—'"

he suddenly broke into the song again in a loud and perfectly unembarrassed tone:

"'Sail away to Galilee.
It 's the beautiful, waiting Tree of Life—
Sail away to Galilee.
Sail away to Galilee.'"

. . . . . .

"Good gwaciouth!" said the young man, fumbling the coin in his pockets and listening in a dazed state of appreciation at the unexpected resources of this menagerie.

"Doctor!" cried Notely—and that address delighted Uncle Benny—"Dr. Spearmint, let me make you acquainted with Mrs. Forrester"—some wailing strains from the violin—"she could get a divorce from her present consort, I suppose—ahem!—if there were encouragement enough from some one sufficiently endowed by nature."

"It is better to be simple than to be wicked," instantly retorted the bright little woman, regarding Uncle Benny humorously and not without compassion.

But Uncle Benny was not to be disturbed again; he had his cue.

"Oh, thank you!" he murmured; "but I couldn't think of it, anyway. I've got so many trusts. There 's Vesty's baby, and there 's the little children I take to school every day and go to fetch them.

I'm very careful, because they're trusts, you see;" and he marched on gladly with the baby, singing.

"You ought to be ashamed, all of you!" said Mrs. Forrester; and sat down by Vesty with friendly advice and prattle about her own babies.

Notely dreamed away on his violin: that made it easy for the rest. His bride and the handsome young man flirted with ardor, yet quite transparently: there was a smile wholly devoid of bitterness on Notely's lips.

"Grace!" cried the sharp little woman at last; "we've some superfluous shawls on board the yacht that would make such charming rugs for Mrs. Rafe's baby. If Mrs. Rafe could send one of her servants down to the shore to call a man from the boat."

"I'd thend—thend the one with the body," said the young man, still afflicted with wonder at Uncle Benny and myself, and indicating Uncle Benny the more hopefully.

"I prefer the one with the mind," said Mrs. Forrester gravely, snapping a glance at him that was not without meaning. "Why, when you have been drinking too much wine, Cousin Jack, can you not go and sit down in a corner and amuse yourself innocently by yourself as Mr. Garrison does?"

At that Notely looked up and shot at her a long, gay challenge without words: his eyes in themselves seemed to fascinate her, as they did most people; she brightened with a caressing, artistic sense of pleasure in them.

"Well, I like that!" said her cousin, having by

this time framed a rejoinder to her question. "Grace and I haven't thpooned anything like you and Note did, thailing down, only you're so deuced thly about it!"

"You are disgusting," said she, too lofty and serene to be annoyed.

I had my hat and was slipping out on my errand to the boat. Vesty, with evident distress, was about to explain: I put my finger to my lips with another side glance of such meaning that she kept still and even smiled again.

I called a man and brought him to the house for Mrs. Forrester's directions. He soon returned with the rugs, which Vesty accepted for her baby as well as she could; Uncle Benny all the time singing gleefully.

The party moved to go; in passing through the door Mrs. Forrester dropped her handkerchief. I picked it up and handed it to her.

"Thank you, my poor fellow," she said; "you have the manners of a prince!" and put a coin in my hand—a piece of silver. I took the money.

Vesty was still, after they were gone, her hands over her face. I knew well what thoughts she was thinking.

"Do not go," she said to me, and her voice was like the low cry of her own child; "you are smiling still." She looked at me with strained eyes.

"Well, perhaps because I am glad Mrs. Garrison would not adopt you and take you away from the Basin; perhaps because I am glad no handsome rake

will ever ogle you as our lisping young man did Mrs. Notely Garrison."

"It meant nothing between them all," said Vesty, her hand over her eyes; "you know that better than I. It is only the way they do."

"It meant nothing! It is only the way they do."

I put away the violin Notely's fingers had so lately touched. The tears stole down Vesty's cheeks and trembled on her lips.

"He does not care," she said; "that is the worst! He does not care as he did once."

"For what, Vesty?"

"For anything but having a good time and making fun with people, and all that. He used to talk with me—oh, so high and noble, about things!" Her eyes flashed, then darkened again with pain.

"Ay, I know he has seen the model and been pierced with it. He can never forget; he will come back."

"The model?"

"You know once there was a Master who was determined all his people should paint him a picture after a great model he had set before them. It seemed not to be an attractive model; it seemed full of pain and loss; the world looked to be full of other designs more desirable.

"So that there were hardly any but that wandered from it, to paint pictures of their own; there was hardly, if ever, a great or a true and patient artist—for they are the same thing.

"Some found the colors at hand so brilliant, and were so possessed with the beauty of dreams of their own, that they spent long years in painting for themselves splendid houses in bewitching landscapes, red passion roses, and heaps of glittering gold, that looked like treasures, but were nothing.

"Some painted dark, sad glimpses of earth and sea and sky that were called beautiful, the skill in them was so perfect. Looking at them, one saw only the drear night drawing on.

"But there were some who had no great dreams of their own to work out, or if they had they turned from them with obedience above all: and many, many, broken-hearted from their failure in their own designs, who turned now to follow the Master's model. And it was strange, but as they regarded it intently and faithfully there grew to be in it for them a beauty ever more and more surpassing all earthly dreams.

"They were dim of sight and trembling of hand; often they mixed the colors wrong, they spilled them, they made great blotches and mistakes; but they washed them out with tears and went to work again, yearning pitifully after the model; in hope or despair, living or dying, their fingers still moved at the task as they kept looking there.

"And always the Master knew. This was the strangest of all, that some of the dimmest, wavering outlines, some of the saddest blotted details, were the beautifullest in his eyes, because he read just the depth of the endeavor underneath; until, in this

light, as he lifted it up, some poor, weary, tearful, bungled work shone fairer than the sun!"

Keeping faithful watch of the clock, Uncle Benny at the appointed hour had given up the baby to Vesty, to go and bring the children home from school. We heard him in the distance still singing joyfully his "Sail away to Galilee!"

"There is a faithful artist," I said, and smiled; "would God I had come up to him, with his unceasing watch over the little ones! And Blind Rodgers too, who never complains, and who will not trouble anybody, but keeps his life so spotless."

Vesty lay very still. "Do you think Notely was painting a picture of his own?" she said. "Do you think I was proud because he could paint such pictures of his own, and wanted him to? You said he had been pierced with it"—she was talking to herself now—"he will come back."

"He will come back."

"Who are you?" she said, her Basin eyes turned clear and full upon me. "You let them call you my servant!"

"Not because I was afflicted with humility, but because I was proud and happy to be that. And because it was a good joke: you do not mind my enjoying a good joke, I hope? Then you do not know how happy it made me; I have had so much done for me, and have been so little useful."

Vesty was not satisfied. Her clear, impersonal gaze held me with a look fearless of its compassion, single and direct.

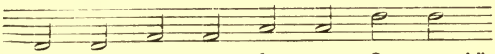
"I wish you would not leave the Basin," she said. "I am never—I am never happy when you are away."

"God bless you, my little girl!" I said, and hobbled away to finish the housework, but my heart seemed to take on a pair of pure white wings, like dove's wings. I forgot withal that I was lame.

XI

ANOTHER NAIL

"CHIPADEES sing pretty," said Captain Pharo, drawing a match along the leg of his trousers and lighting his pipe, as we stood amid the song of birds in the lane—"but robins is noisy creeturs, always at the same old tune—poo! poo! hohum! Wal, wal—



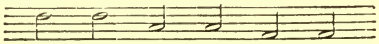
he paused there, having his pipe well going.

"Yes," said I, gulping down some unworthy emotions of my own; "yes, indeed."

"Come down to see ef ye wouldn't like t' go up t' the Point with us, t' git a nail put in the hoss's shu-u?"

"Oh, yes, thank you! by all means," I replied.

"My woman heered—poo! poo!—



—she heered 't there was goin' to be a show up thar' to-night—some play-actor folks. 'Ten Nights in a Ba-ar Room'"—the captain took the pipe out of his mouth and yawned with affected unconcern. "I've

heered o' worse names for a show; but ye know what women-folks is when there 's any play-actin' around. They're jest like sheep next to a turnip patch."

"Are they?"

"Oh, by clam! ye don't know nothin' 'bout female grass yit, major—nothin'. Bars can't shet 'em out." I followed his sad gaze to the west, and we sighed in unison.

"By the way, how 's your show stock gittin' along, major?"

"My show stock?"

"Why, sartin; we thinks all the more on ye, ef that c'd be, for havin' some business. Ye see, the way my woman found it out, she runs over to Lunette's every mail day and helps her sort the mail, 'nd she said all the letters 't come directed to 'Mr. Paul Henry' had a mess o' wax run onto the fold of every envelope with a pictur' stamped inter it o' a couple o' the cur'osest-lookin' creeturs; said 'twas jest the head an' necks of 'em an' they looked to be retchin' up ter eat out o' the same soup plate; said 't must be your stock to the circus; for business folks often has their business picturs put on outside their envelopes, ye know, and jedgin' by the cur'osity of 'em, she thought they must be doin' pretty well by ye."

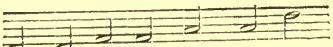
"Oh, they are, captain," I sighed; "yes, they're doing pretty well by me."

"Wal now, ef you've got a comf'tably good thing, major, be content with it; 'tain't easy to git onto a new job nowadays. Ain't there some pertick'lar

spear o' grass ye'd like t' have set on the back seat with ye?" he continued cheerfully. "She rides easier for havin' consid'rable ballast, ye know."

"I don't know of any. Mrs. Lester is away at her daughter-in-law's."

"Hain't ye never thought—poo! poo! hohum!—wal, wal—



"'The blighting wind sweeps o'er, she—'

hain't ye never thought o' Miss Pray?"

"In what way, captain?"

"Wal, as a—poo! poo!—

"'She—'

as a pertick'lar spear, ye know?"

"No."

"In course human nature turns natchally to pink and white clover, like Vesty; but I tell ye, major, when it comes to a honest jedgment o' grass thar' 's lots o' comfort arter all to be took out o' old red timothy. Old red timothy goes to shutin' right up straight an' minds her own business. She ain't a-tryin' so many o' these d—d ructions on ye. My foot 's some better," said he, lifting the maimed member; "but she ain't yit what she use ter be. It 'u'd make a home for ye, 'ithout payin' no board, an' ef ye got red o' payin' yer board ye wouldn't mind ef she didn't treat ye quite so well—for that 's the way 'ith all female grass, clover 'n' all, when

they once gits spliced onto ye. But 'ith what ye gits from yer show ye c'd buy a hoss, an' when the wind 's in the nor'-east ye c'd tack away from home on some arrant—see? But don't arsk her, 'less ye means ter stand by it, major, for the women-folks has got to settin' onaccountable store by ye, ye kind o' humors of 'em so."

I limped down the lane to invite Miss Pray on our excursion, with light feet. Was it the air again, or was it the new consciousness that I was developing into a beloved and coveted beau?

I stepped into the cottage through the low window, as I often did. At the same moment the cover of the wood-box flew up, and I beheld the rosy, good-natured visage of Miss Pray's orphan girl looking out: she put her finger on her lip.

"Sh!"

"What is it?" I said.

She pointed upward. I saw on the long spike which held the horseshoe over the door a pail of water so delicately hung that whoever first entered there must receive its contents in one fell unmitigated deluge upon the crown.

"Sh! It 's Wesley's" (her fellow-orphan) "it 's Wesley's birthday. I ain't got no present to give him, so I'm going to *souze* him with cold water: he 's bringin' in some wood—there 's steps! Sh!"

She ducked into the wood-box, which had subterranean channels of escape, with anticipated delight, and put down the cover, leaving me alone in the room with the approaching victim and in the unen-

viable position of appearing to be the sole perpetrator of this malign deed.

I had the merest time to master this idea, when the door swung in upon its hinges, and not Wesley, but Miss Pray herself, stood before me, a mad and a blighted object.

I gazed at her, horror-struck, and was endeavoring to speak, when Wesley, staggering in behind her with his arms full of wood, came to my relief. "O Miss Pray, 'twan't major, honest 'twan't, nor 'twan't me, Miss Pray: 'twas that Belle O'Neill, an' she 's mos' got to the graves by this time. I seed her runnin', through the windy. O Lord! O Miss Pray! how wet you looks when you're as wet as you be now, Miss Pray!"

"Indeed it was not meant for you," I cried. "Belle meant it for a birthday jest on Wesley."

"Oh, I wish it had b'en, Miss Pray," gasped poor Wesley, with ill-timed sympathy; "I'm so much more used to bein' wet 'n you be."

It was doubtful toward which Miss Pray was waxing most warm—the recusant Belle O'Neill, or the stupid, open-mouthed Wesley—when I stepped in at this juncture and entreated her with the Kobbes' invitation.

"I'll go," said she, with evident satisfaction gleaming even through her dripping state, "'s soon 's I've changed my clo's and whipped Belle O'Neill."

During the former process I volunteered, as one whom she would trust, to watch for Belle, and lure

her, if possible, to the house. I repeatedly saw that damsel's head peering out from behind the gravestones of Miss Pray's ancestors, down by the sea-wall, and making signals to me to know if advance were safe.

And every time, prostituting sublime justice to a weak sense of compassion, I waved her back to her fastness until after we should be gone.

"Shall I tell her 't you'll whip her after you git back, Miss Pray?" said Wesley, with deep relish.

"No," said Miss Pray, who had now appeared, resplendent in holiday attire. "Do you want her to run away, and leave me without help? *All'as* keep your mouth shet—that 's the safest commands for you; all'as keep your mouth shet."

Wesley closed that wide organ, with a look of wondering surprise.

Miss Pray was lean and resplendent, not gray and comfortable like my friend Mrs. Lester. There was no blueberry "turnover" to devour. As we passed over the jolting road I clung desperately to the carriage bars.

But it appeared that the captain had an abnormal design, before entering the Point, of descending into a shallow branch of Crooked River, there to wash the mud of past happy epochs from the carriage.

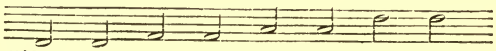
"Wal, Cap'n Pharo Kobbe," said his young wife, stultified with amaze at this proceeding, "I should like to know what 's took you!"

"Adm'r'l bet, spell ago, 't he could scrape twenty-five pound o' mud off'n my two-seated kerridge next

time I driv her to the Point. Jest keep yer eyes up the road," said Captain Pharo, standing, diligently and furtively swashing, with his unconscious boots submerged in water, "t' see that thar' ain't nobody lookin'."

"What 's he goin' to give ye, if ye win the bet, cap'n?" said his lively wife.

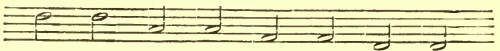
The captain cast me a dark and fleeting wink over his shoulder. "Poo! poo!" he sang: "hohum!



anybody in sight, major?"

"No; the road is all clear."

"What 's he goin' to give ye, Cap'n Pharo Kobbe, if ye win the bet?"



"Ye needn't keep on singin', Captain Pharo Kobbe; for the sake o' the company, I shan't ask ye nothin' more."

Saddened by this blight, his evil and surreptitious deed being accomplished, Captain Pharo backed out of the stream.

But the triumphant smile returned to his countenance as he advanced on the Point and found Admiral 'S I Sums-it-up sitting within the porch of the grocery with other of his townsmen.

"Adm'r'l," said Captain Pharo, "I want ye to step down here and scrape twenty-five pound o' mud off'n my two-seated kerridge."

The admiral regarded us fixedly for some moments, fireless pipe in expressionless mouth, and then rose and descended to us. The women had already contemptuously left our company and gone about their shopping.

"Come along, Kobbe!" said the admiral, "and bring"—he glanced with calm, meaningless vision at me—"bring all the rest on ye."

He led us under the loud sign of a tin shop, where, after sedate speculation in the matter of purchasing a tea-kettle with a consuming leak in the bottom, he cleared his throat. "'S I sums it up," said he to the proprietor, without further utterance; that individual looked doubtfully at me.

"Oh, he 's all right," said Captain Pharo; "he 's a cousin o' mine in the show business."

This introduction proving more than satisfactory, we were ushered into a small room apart and the door locked behind us: but missing Uncle Coffin's inspiration in this case, and remembering the quality of the liquid, I made a smart show of drinking, without in the least diminishing the contents of the bottle.

Not so, however, good Captain Pharo: from this time on his conduct waxed sunny and genial, as well as irresponsible of the grave duties which had hitherto afflicted him.

"Thar' 's a lot o' winter cabbage, 't was sp'ilin' down in my suller, 't I put in onto the kerridge floor, major," said he; "ef ye're mind ter sell 'em out for what ye can git, to harves, ye're welcome. Sell 'em

out to hulls, by clam!" he called after me. "I ain't so mean 't I carn't help a young man along a little."

I returned to the carriage and arranged my fading cabbages as attractively as possible, offset by the glories of the star bed-quilt; and whether it was because the news had already spread that I was in the show business, or by reason of some of those occult charms at which Captain Pharo had hinted, I was soon surrounded by a lively group of women.

"Here 's one 't ain't worth but two cents," said one fair creature, holding up a specimen of my stock, whose appearance beside her own fresh beauty caused me to writhe for shame. "I shan't give a mite more for her."

"O madam, is she worth that?" I denied impulsively.

The woman, speechless, dropped the cabbage to the earth.

"Here 's a nickel, anyway, for your bein' so honest," she exclaimed, soon afterward.

I took it with a bow. And here sordid considerations ceased, as they had begun: my pious emotions toward the sex conquered, and I became not the base purveyor but the elegant distributor of cabbages, right and left, only with murmured apologies for gifts so unworthy.

I was now evidently classified as belonging high in the spectacular drama; when the horse, having finished the meal of cracked corn he had been enjoying by the roadside, with the reins thrown slack over his neck, suddenly lifted his head with an air

of arriving at some instant conclusion and started merrily down the road.

Too lame to jump from a moving vehicle, my first emotions of dismay gradually disappeared, however, as I found that our passage was not disturbed even by the most untoward outward events. For a base-ball from the bat of some players in an adjoining field hit the noble animal full in the flank without occasioning any alarm to his gait or divergence from his resolved purpose.

He turned down the Artichoke road and went straight to Uncle Coffin's. "I've come to take you and Aunt Salomy to the show," I said, lifted out and knocked hither and thither by my friend in his tender ecstasy.

"Cruisin' out on the high seas without no rudder, you—you young spark, you!" he cried delightedly. "You're 'most too full o' the devil t' exist!" he exclaimed at last, holding me out at arm's-length admiringly.

Proud now of my wickedness as I had formerly been of my charms, I steered my friends to the Point by the conventional means of the rudder. Captain Pharo, who had been so congenially occupied that he had not even missed me, heaped encomiums upon me, and receiving Uncle Coffin almost with tears of joy in his eyes, led him away to the tin shop.

I secured more cracked corn for the horse and shed-room, where I tied him with retrospective security. There being no restaurant, I obtained some biscuits

and cheese, and with these and six tickets for the very front row, Aunt Salomy and Mrs. Kobbe and Miss Pray and I stole early into the hall and sat us down to rest.

There were already figures as for a rehearsal behind the curtain; indeed, that thin structure revealed angry silhouettes, and loud voices reached us.

"Sh!" came from that source: "or them fools down there, eatin' crackers an' cheese, 'll hear ye."

"I don't care if the whole town hears me," replied a passionate female voice. "You said I could have twenty dollars, and now you won't give it to me. I won't play to-night till I do have it—hear that!"

"Sh! or I'll shake ye! Don't make a fool o' yourself, Maud. Wait till I get to-night's receipts——"

"I won't! I'd like to see you shake me; ha! ha!"

Here the angry figures became plastic and tilted at each other menacingly; the woman seized something and threw it; there was a crash.

Aunt Salomy choked placidly over her cracker crumbs. Mrs. Kobbe gazed with faithful interest.

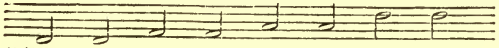
Soon the very tall and hard-looking young man who had sold me the tickets came down from behind the curtain, with a hang-dog air, and his handkerchief bound about his head, and returned to the office at the door.

Almost at the same moment Captain Pharo and Uncle Coffin walked fearlessly up the aisle, their familiar hats on their heads, their pipes in harmo-

nious glowing action, and sat down beside us with beams of recognition.

The hard young man, who appeared to be pecuniary manager as well as leading star of the show, came to us. "No smoking here!" he said, severely.

"No smokin'!" replied Captain Pharo. "Ye'd orter put it on yer plackards then! D'ye s'pose I'd come to yer show ef I'd known that? Come along, Coffin! I'm goin' ter hang out outside, by clam!



"'My days are as the grass, Or as—'"

"No singing, either, sir, on the part of the audience. This company is from Boston, sir."

"Is she?" said Captain Pharo, with blighting sarcasm, new-lighting his pipe preparatory to leaving the hall; "I thought she was from Jaffy!"

"Dodrabbit ye. Pharo!" said Uncle Coffin, wirily folding his powerful arms; "keep yer seat, Pharo, and keep yer pipe. Ef any man from Boston, or any other man, wants ter take the pipe outer my mouth, or outer Pharo Kobbe's mouth, let 'im come on an' try it!"

At this opportunity, I silently pressed a coin of such meaning into the manager's hand that he skipped gracefully past us to the stage, where he proceeded to explain—while the ribs of court-plaster with which he had endeavored to conceal his wounds kept constantly falling upon the floor—that, owing to the unavoidable illness of some of the actors, he should be obliged to give us a choice variety entertainment instead of the play advertised.

Captain Pharo and Uncle Coffin, not yet comprehending this idea, and smoking triumphantly with their hats on, listened to several ranting recitations from the wife who had so inopportunely defaced her husband's visage; but when, after a brief recess, she again appeared with a stage bow, Captain Pharo looked blankly at Uncle Coffin.

"Where 's the ba-ar, Coffin?"

"I kind o' suspicion they've giv' it up, Pharo; goin' to have recitationers 'nstead."

"Curfew *shall* not ring to-night!" yelled the woman on the stage, with a leap of several feet perpendicularly.

"By clam!" cried poor Captain Pharo, rising; "I don' know what she is, but she *is* goin' to ring, and she 's goin' to ring loud too, by clam! I come here to see 'Ten Nights in a Ba-ar Room,' I didn't come here t' see contortioners and recitationers. Give us any more o' yer——"

Here, an onion, thrown from the rear of the room by some sympathetic partner in Captain Pharo's woes, came whizzing over our heads and just missed the woman, by good aim; she retreated without the formality of her usual sweeping bow. The manager began hastily to get together his stage setting for the play. A table and a bottle were first produced; Captain Pharo and Uncle Coffin began to nudge each other with choice anticipation of the advancing drama, when another onion, thrown with unerring vision, took the bottle and shattered it, with its contents, upon the stage floor, directly under our faces.

Captain Pharo leaned forward and sniffed; so did Uncle Coffin.

"Water! Coffin, by clam!" said Captain Pharo, rising. "Plackards said 'twas goin' to be a re'listic play—and here, by clam! I've rode twelve miles over a hubbly road an' waited 'round here all day, jest t' hear a spear o' female grass screech, an' see a pint bottle o' water busted! Come along! I'm goin' home."

How futile indeed are the poor effects of the stage compared with the ever new and varied drama of life itself!

As Miss Pray and I came in sight of her cottage, at this now uncanny hour of the night, we saw that the house was all alight, and Belle O'Neill stood in the doorway, loudly and gleefully ringing the dinner-bell.

"O Miss Pray, there was a dead pig washed ashore to-day, right down on your clam-bottoms—such a beautiful one!—jest as fat!—and me and Wesley brought it up and roasted it, and we've been expectin' you, an' expectin' you, an' tryin' to keep it hot——"

"A dead pig!" hissed Miss Pray. "Do you want to murder us? Do you want to drown me in the morning and p'ison me at night, Belle O'Neill? For heaven's sake, have you et any of it?"

The appearance of the dish testified only too plainly that she and Wesley had dined.

"You're p'isoned!" shrieked Miss Pray: "be you prepared, Belle O'Neill? Fat pig! He was prob-

'bly bloated with p'ison! Oh, dear! oh, mercy! you're prob'bly dyin' this very minit."

Belle O'Neill began to howl, Wesley to weep dismally with low moans, his fists in his eyes.

I had a medicine which I administered to the two, in case the exigency were as fearful as Miss Pray predicted, which I strongly doubted. From this, as Belle O'Neill recovered, she turned to Miss Pray with the confessional fearlessness of one who has been at the grave's brink.

"And, oh, Miss Pray! the brindle cow 's calved and hid it in the woods!"

"So you've been down by the sea-wall, hunting up things to p'ison the only friend you ever had on earth with, and left the brindle cow and her calf to die in the woods?"

But Belle O'Neill had reached that plane of despondency where the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune could no longer sting her.

"I meant it for the best, Miss Pray," she said, as we all started, with the lantern, for the woods.

Never had I engaged in a scene of such eerie fascinations; especially as, when we discovered the cow with her calf, and endeavored to set the latter on its feet and lead it, the cow shook her horns at us with such an aggressive lunge, I fled without apology behind a tree, where Miss Pray and Wesley, dropping the lantern, pursued me with entreaties for protection!

But Belle O'Neill, seemingly conscious that she had to redeem herself by some heroic act or die,

picked up the lantern and continued leading the calf, at which the cow singled her out with respect and obediently followed her: so that we who had witnessed her disgrace now followed meekly, afar off, her triumphal procession homeward.

"That girl has done nobly," I said.

"Belle O'Neill," said Miss Pray, before we finally sought that repose which is the guerdon of all nobly sustained adventure, "the drownin' and the p'isonin' is both forgot, and next time the jew'lry pedler comes along you shall have a breas'pin—that is, if you're livin', Belle O'Neill."

"Oh, Belle will live," I cried; "the danger is over."

"Whether I lives or whether I dies," said Belle O'Neill, calm now on heights above us all, "I meant that roast pig for the best, Miss Pray."

But before I could get to sleep that night I gave myself up to folly; I rolled in inextinguishable fits of laughter. My gray heraldry, my ancient coat of arms, innocently maligned as they had been, stared down reproachfully at me through the night. I feebly wiped my weeping eyes and rolled and laughed the more, and slept at last such a sleep as only the foolish and blessed of mortality know.

XII

THE MASTER REVELLER

"NOTELY! You will be leading Fluke to go wrong, Notely. He takes no interest at home or in the fishing since you and those pleasure-men you have with you have been keeping open house at the Neck. When he comes home he has been wild and drinking, and is moody. It is a week since you have been away from your home and wife with your yacht anchored here off shore, hunting and cruising, and such times at the old Garrison place at night—it is the talk!"

Notely laughed and rose. Vesty had been standing looking down at him earnestly, where he sat in her doorway: she held her baby asleep on one strong arm, its face against her neck.

Notely turned his own face away a little, jingling the free coin in his pockets. "Why, I have been making money on my own account, Mrs. Gurdon Rafe," he cried gayly, "since I opened the quarry. And no man, nor no woman either, now says to me, Do this or do that, go here or go there. From all accounts, moreover, my wife and mother are enjoying themselves extremely well as ever during my absence. As for Fluke Rafe, he is a good fellow, but he was always wild as a hawk."

"O Notely! if you would only help such men, as you might, instead of being as wild as a hawk with them!"

"It takes a hawk to catch a hawk, my dear: all the ministers will tell you that."

"Is that what you are doing it for?"

"Well, no; since you are a Basin, and only truth avails, there has been hitherto no deep moral design in my merry orgies at the Neck. But to-night, Vesty, is my grand affair; to be hallowed by the presence of all the Basins: my feast and ball to them, you know—my oldest and best friends. And you—why, Vesty," he went on, in another tone, "you remember we had always a dance a week at the Basin, and you and I led them off together. Come, then, for the sake of old times and the feeling of the rest, though you may enjoy it yourself no more."

He spoke with reckless meaning, and his eyes, that had such fatal power of expression in them, looked deep into hers. She paled; the baby threw up a sleeping hand against her face.

"There is another thing, Notely," she said. "Gurdon does not like it that you come here for an hour or more every day to sit and talk alone with me while they are at the fishing. He is not much to suspect, and he was always fond of you and trusted you; but it is not doing right by Gurdon."

Her eyes looked infinitely sorrowful into his; blushes, like pain, dyed her cheeks.

"O Vesty, my pure one!—then tell me that you

love me still—love me as you used to do—and I'll go away content, and not come any more. Touch my head as you used to do; kiss me once more, with those words, and——"

The baby's white, sleeping palm pressed hard against the mother's burning cheek.

"Such words must not be any more, Notely. Go away and be the good, powerful man God meant you to be, and I shall love you more than I ever did in my life."

"Saint Vesta! I have lost you!" said Notely: his voice shook with passion; the thin, strong hand that he put up, as if shading his eyes, hid wild and angry tears.

"I have been faithfully engaged in the career to which you so tenderly and considerately dedicated me," he went on. "What will you have? I worked last winter like a dog; nothing is easy won, I think: but there is no young man in this State who has been so flattered with public notice as I. I am making my own money—no young man more shrewdly, they say. What will you have? I have growing fame, prosperity, an accomplished society woman for my wife. Was not that what you wished for me?" His words stung.

Vesty had her dim look; she had turned cold; her speech groped pitifully. "But I think I saw—I think I understood a little, after all—because I loved you—what are you doing it *for*, Notely?"

"Ah, there, indeed!—what for? I have lost my object, you know, Saint Vesta. For fame and frolic

and the devil, I suppose—since we are talking face to face with an immortal Basin—and to fill up the time generally."

"I am glad that I did what I did," cried the poor girl, her tongue touched with sudden fire, as if from outside herself; "you loved me a little, but you did not love me much!"

"Ah!" he caught his breath, his deep eyes thrilled her.

"If you had loved me much—such a man as to be true to me through hard work and time and sorrow and all—then you could not have borne to be any less a man, Notely Garrison, though you lost me, or whatever you lost. But if anything could turn you from *that*, then time and trial and all would have turned you, sooner or later, to be unkind and untrue to me. I know it. Before God, I know it! You loved me a little, but you did not love me much!

"I am glad, for your sake and for my own," she said; "I am glad that I did not marry you."

Then, as the fire flamed out, tears of despair rushed to her eyes, because he looked as though she had hurt him so—his face more like a beautiful cameo than ever, pure and sharp; he who was so debonair and generous with them all, genial toward them always, and familiar with the simplest and poorest. She longed impulsively to take him to her heart, to give him with yearning tenderness the one caress he had pleaded for: but, still seeing dimly where he was blind, she would not.

Notely watched that struggle, saw the impulse fade upon her face into a white resolve; watched her keenly meanwhile with tumultuous hope.

"Vesty, once when we were little more than children, we were playing on Ladle Rock and I fell. You did not leave me, frightened; insensible as I was, you bathed my face and stayed by me. When I came to myself my head was in your lap. You had on a brown cotton frock, made in an old-womanish grave fashion, and you were looking down at me. From that moment all my life changed—who can explain it? I was a child in my feeling toward you no longer, with childish thoughts. I loved you—loved you as I love you now—but you have robbed me of my life."

"No," she said. That sad fire from outside herself came back to her. "You have only been denied one pleasure the more that you wanted, and that would not have been so dear to you long if you had not lost it. Life is above that, you used to tell me, but you have forgotten."

"Rather, I have grown wiser," he said, but for the instant he set his clear, fine face away from her. "It is a distorted notion that our existence here is for cold denial, from however pure an imagination. It is better to run with life, to follow joyfully the great trend of nature."

He looked at her: her staid, unreproachful eyes, her calm and holy face, smote him.

"My pleasure-friends, as you call them, say that the Basins are simple. That is a superficial obser-

vation;" he laughed with despair, and proceeded to fill his pipe. "The Basins are like a rock."

"Notely," said she very slowly then, "your face is dear to me as this little one upon my breast; it eats into my heart."

All life's sorrow looked through her, and a faith, a purpose, stronger than life. Notely cast his misery from him with a sigh; the game was over.

"Saint Vesta," said he simply, "I have lost you; that is the sad fact, and I accept it. Still, since you care for me some, I shall be a little merry. Come to my ball—Gurdon promised me you would both come."

XIII

CAPTAIN LEEZUR RELATES HOW MIS' GARRISON ATE CROW

"It 's said," said Captain Leezur, who sat on the log fondly applying his deer-bone toothpick, which had been restored to him for a season, "'t ye keep yer mouth shet, and ye won't eat no crow."

His smile embraced the heavens, as the source of such philosophy, with transcendent admiration.

"That 's figgeral language, ye know. Have a narvine lozenge. I all'as enj'ys 'em with a friend more'n what I dew meltin' on 'em deown alone."

We sucked deliciously.

"Afore I got my dispersition moderated deown inter the shape she is neow, I was dreadful kind o' sly and ongodly abeout cuttin' up tricks," he continued, his countenance now conveying only the tranquillity of one restored and forgiven.

"Mis' Garrison, Notely's mother, she was all'as puttin' on airs tew the Basins, 's if they was beneath her; and when they'd first begun to live over there to the Neck, she sent a man deown t' me, 't said Mis' Garrison had 'ordered' a pair o' partridge on me.

"'What?' says I to the man.

"'Mis' Garrison said t' order a couple o' partridge on ye,' says he, 'an' she wants 'em at tew o'clock.'

"'All right,' says I; 'yew go home an' tell her 't she shall have that 'ere order filled eout complete,' says I.

"So I went eout and gunned one partridge and one old crow, 't had been ha'ntin' my corn patch ever senct I could remember, so 't he was jest as familiar tew me as the repair on the slack o' my britches, and I dressed 'em both, dreadful tasty an' slick—they was jest 'beout the same size dressed—an' rigged 'em eout esthetiky with some strips o' pink caliker; and 'long at the 'p'inted time the man he come deown arter 'em.

"'Yew tell Mis' Garrison,' says I, ''t birds is so thick 'reound my premmuses this year I couldn't think o' chargin' nothin' for 'em, 'specially to an old Basin like her!'

"For in them days, 'fore I got moderated, I didn't mind p'intin' hints at nobody, or weoundin' their feelin's, 'specially ef it jibed along in with playin' some ongodly trick on 'em."

The joy of a ransomed soul played across Captain Leezur's features.

"Wal, Notely was areound a day or tew arterwards—Notely an' me was great mates—'nd says I, 'Heow'd yer mother like them birds I sent up tew 'er?' says I. 'Why, one on 'em was r'al good, Uncle Leezur,' says he, 'and one on 'em' "—Captain Leezur glanced cautiously toward the house-door

before he continued—"'one on 'em was tough as the devil's kite-string; tough as a d—d old crow!' says he.

"Wal, I made it up to Note in more ways 'n one, for him and me was great mates; but I never let on 'beout that pertickaler mess o' birds. Keep yer mouth shet, ye know, and ye won't eat no crow—that is, 'less somebody 's been playin' some ongodly trick on ye."

Captain Leezur never laughed aloud: his smile simply widened and broadened until it became a scintillating sun, without the disgrace of cachinnation.

"Neow there 's all'as a meanin' in figgeral language," he continued, "an' when Mis' Garrison got set ag'inst Note and Vesty's marryin', jest 'cause Vesty was poor an' a Basin, an' set ter work ter break it off by fair means or by feoul, she got her meouth open for a good-sized ondigestible mess o' crow.

"In figgeral language; for I don't reck'lect jest the exac' date when she did r'a'ly eat crow; 'twas a good many years ago, 'n' I wouldn't have her hear of it neow for nothin'. I'm natch'ally ashamed o' them ongodly tricks neow—'nd besides, it 'u'd lay harder on her stommick 'n a high-school grammar."

"I won't tell her," I said. "I'm hardly acquainted with her, anyway."

"I'd give all I've got, every mite, ef it c'd help save Note," said Captain Leezur, a tear trickling down his sun-face. "All things is good ef we use 'em in moderation; but we've got ter use modera-

tion, in eatin' an' drinkin', an' lobster sallid—yes, an' even in passnips. Nothin' 'll dew but the same old rewl, even in passnips.

"I heered voices deown to the shore last night," he continued, with a sort of yearning confidence toward me, so that I bent my ear nearer, with some of his own sorrow. "I reckoned one on 'em was Notely's voice, talkin' and larfin' as hilar'ous as ef 'twas sun-up. So I went deown there, and there was Note and one o' them fellers with him, each on 'em with a stiff tod o' whiskey aboard, a-pullin' there for dear life, an' the dory anchored fast as fast could be to the staple!

"They was lookin' for lan'marks and pullin' and sheoutin' and larfin'—'twas kinder moonlight, ye know—and one on 'em says, 'Seems ter me 't takes a cussed long time t' git to the Neck to-night,' says he. I sot there an' watched 'em; knew 'twouldn't do 'em no harm t' pull, knew 'twas doin' 'em good an' steadyin' of 'em. By an' by, I ups an' says, 'Ship ahoy!'

"'Hello!' says Note.

"'Why don't ye weigh anchor?' says I.

"Wal, when that idee come deown atop of 'em, ye never see a couple sobered so quick as they was. They giv' three cheers, an' nothin' 'd dew but I must git into the dory an' go up to the Neck with 'em.

"Wal, I had my objec'; an' when they took me in t treat me, the rest o' Note's company was settin' 'reound there, an' I ups an' says, 'Jest one glass, an' ef *yew* takes *any* more I won't tetch even that,'

says I. 'Yew've had enough—tew much,' says I. 'Moderation in all things,' says I, 'even as low deown as passnips.'

"They all giv' me another three cheers; but they didn't drink no more. An' nothin' 'd dew but I must set deown, an' then nothin' 'd dew but I must give 'em my views on moderation!"

Captain Leezur did swallow a little hard with the effort not to appear too highly flattered!

"So I sot there an' giv' 'em my views on moderation. I must say for 'em, they appeared dreadful interested; they sot kind o' leanin' forrards, with their meouths not more 'n harf—'n' sartin not more 'n a quarter ways—shet; an' when I'd got through, they giv' me another reousin' three cheers ag'in.

"They told me all abeout Lot's wife, tew," said Captain Leezur, with grateful seriousness; "they've been great travellers, ye know; all abeout the appearance o' that location where she sot, an' heow it looked arfter she'd got up an' went, an' the aspec's o' Jaffy, an' all them interestin' partickalers, more'n what I ever heered from anybody afore."

I looked at Captain Leezur to see if no suspicion of earthly treachery was on his sun-blessed visage. None.

I lifted my hat with a nameless reverence too deep for words, and left him, still smiling upward.

XIV

"TAR-A-TA!" OF THE TRUMPET

FLUKE played, with the dense black hair tossing above his handsome eyes, but Gurdon with a calm brow, though he too loved the music and dancing.

"Go and have a turn with Vesty yourself," said Fluke; "we'll keep up fiddling, change about, with the organ."

For Notely, studying every heart-throb of the Basins, had had a little parlor organ brought in for the night and put up in place of his piano; at it sat Mrs. Judah Kobbe, cousin and guest of the Pharo Kobbes, playing with such lively spirit and abandon that the very lamps danced upon the organ-brackets in untripping time with the feet of the dancers on the floor.

I had already detected in the tone of society toward Mr. and Mrs. Judah Kobbe that they were awesome cosmopolites from some source. I now learned that they were from a crowded mart called Machias. Captain Pharo also told me mysteriously, in the pauses of his pipe, "'t they was l'arneder 'n any fish 't swims;" so I gazed at them with wonder from a distance, but did not much dream that it would be for me to speak with them.

All along the edges of the floor were strewn children and babies, comfortably wrapped and laid to sleep; the habit of the Basins, who had no servants at home wherewith to leave them.

Notely Garrison had led the dance with Vesty; now she sat rocking her baby, near Gurdon, who turned to them with a smile and swept a softer strain now and then, as when he played them to sleep at home.

"Introduce me to the 'mezzo-tint' study yonder, the mediæval picture over there, rocking her infant, back of the fiddlers."

Notely slightly turned from his fellow-reveller, flushing.

"There are pretty girls enough here for you to dance with, Sid; she would not like it. They are such simple people they would not understand. She is married, you see."

"You danced with her."

'Oh, I am an old friend."

"Tar-a-ta! tar-a-ta!" went Captain Judah's trumpet, and I looked up to see what new event its blast denoted. For Captain Judah was a stage driver, and having brought his horn along as a signal compliment to the occasion, he was now conducting the first stages of the ball with those loud flourishes and elegant social *convenances* which only those sophisticated by extreme culture are supposed to understand.

"Tar-a-ta! tar-a-ta!"

I saw that Vesty and Gurdon had risen to dance

together. Vesty wrapped and laid her sleeping baby among the others, and Gurdon stepped out to perform first that solitary jig or shuffle which is demanded of every householder among the Basins, before he can lead his partner to the dance.

Notely and the young man he had called "Sid" watched him shaking his long legs, his heavy, noble face perfectly sincere and unembarrassed; for was it not the ancient, honorable custom of the Basins?

"Stolid cart-horse, by Jove!" sneered Sid, casting a glowing glance at Vesty, "for such a Venus!"

Notely did not like the tone. "There 's some stolid granite in my quarry," he snarled softly; "but it 's everlasting good granite, all the same, Sid."

"You've been knocked over, I see," said the irrepressible Sid, smiling intelligently at him. "Well, I'm off for the jig."

"Tar-a-ta! tar-a-ta!"

The trumpet punctually announced the appearance of so much colorless linen and broadcloth on the floor; but the Basins, who were fine, gazed at his severe costume with tender pity.

"Sid," appreciating this, dared not laugh: he endeavored to redeem this lack of beauty by a display of his white bediamonded hand on his watch-guard, as he entreated a partner for the dance, but he was not held for much; that was evident.

Now and then in the reel he touched Vesty's hand, or swung with her, and he stared at her consistently and immoderately throughout; but always for him the holy lids were low over her eyes.

My heart exulted something like the next blast of the trumpet; I turned to look. Vesty was safe.

"Tar-a-ta! tar-a-ta!"

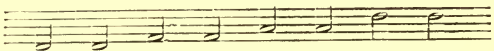
But Captain Pharo needed no stirring strain to his consciousness as he walked, with scarcely perceptible limp, to the middle of the floor.

That flowered jacket, the arnica bloom glowing like sunrise on the back! Those new trousers, of "middling" sacks, "Brand No. 1" proudly distinct upon the right leg!

"Give me sea-room here, give me sea-room," said the hero; "and jest wait till I git my spavins warmed up a little!"

A wide, clear swath was cut from the billows that surrounded Captain Pharo.

"Now then," said he, pulling his pipe from his pocket, and drawing a match in the usual informal way; "Poo! poo! hohum!—



strike up somethin' lively over there, Gurd. Give us 'The Wracker's Darter,' by clam!"

Gurdon, who had returned to relieve Fluke at the violin, good-naturedly struck up "The Wrecker's Daughter."

"Can't ye put a little sperrit into 'er, Gurd? Is this 'ere a fun'al? That 's it! Now then—'Touch and go is a good pilot.'"

With these words, Captain Pharo sprang with ox-like levity from the floor, and amid the giddy swift-

ness of the music I was occasionally conscious of hearing his mailed heels flow together with a clash that made the rafters ring. He descended at last ominously, but when the reverberations died away I looked, and saw that he was whole.

Notely came over and shook hands with him, laid an arm proudly on his proud shoulder, and led him away to the "mess" room, where his stewards were busy.

"Dodrabbit ye, Pharo!" cried a voice from the fondest of the Artichokes, seizing him with an exultant pride which he affected to hide under derogatory language; "was that you I seen in there jest now, stompin' the frescoes off'n the ceilin'?"

"Altogether most entertaining jig that has been danced this evening," said one of Notely's broadcloth guests, very superciliously.

"Oh, I hain't danced none yit," said Captain Pharo, too confident to show contempt; "only warmin' my spavins;" and he heartlessly turned the complete flower in view for the further annihilation of the gentleman in black.

"Ef I c'd 'a' got on my scuffs," said Captain Leezur, his sun-visage showing against the crimson back of an easy-chair, "I don't know but what I sh'd been 'most tempted ter jine the darnce myself. But no; I couldn't pervail with 'em—so long sence I've wrarstled with 'em—so I come right 'long in my felts."

"No, ye can't dance 'The Wracker's Darter,' that is, not as she orter be danced, in felts," said Captain

Pharo; "she 's a tune 't wants the emphasis brought right down onto her; felts won't do it, nor scuffs neither."

"That off foot o' mine kind o' b'longs to the church, anyway," said Captain Leezur sweetly; "has for years; don't pain me much as I knows on, but she ain't seound: if t'other one starts off kind o' skittish she 's sartin to hold back——"

"Ye'd orter be thankful 't ye only has to contend with natch'al diserbilities," interposed Captain Pharo, "'n' don't have any o' these d—d ructions played on ye."

"Oh, by the way, what are 'ructions'?" inquired the guest of supercilious temperament.

"Le' me see," said Captain Pharo; "you're the one 't Note said was from Washin'ton, ain't ye? Washin'ton, D. C.?"

"Certainly."

"P'litical centre o' the United States of Amer. iky?"

"Why, yes."

"An' you don't know what ructions be!"

Loud laughter greeted this sally; only the man who had been in California sat moody, his basilisk eye fixed upon me.

"Then I'll tell ye what ructions be," proceeded Captain Pharo, breathing stertorously through his pipe; "it's repealin' all our optional acts, for one thing! We can't institoot an optional act down here, but what you go an' repeal it!"

"Oh, stuff!" said the high and hot-headed young

man, quite taken off his level by the laughter round him; "I don't either!"

"I say ye do!" said Captain Pharo, waxing more and more wroth; "ye sets some feller t' work there, 't never see salt water, t' make our laws for us; 'lows us to ketch all the spawn lobsters and puts injunctions onter the little ones: like takin' people when they gits to be sixteen or twenty year old, 'n' choppin' their heads off—yer race is goin' to multiply almighty fast, ain't it?"

"I hadn't observed any lack of increase in your amiable race, sir."

"Ye hadn't, hadn't yer?" said Captain Pharo, in the voice of a smouldering volcano, laying a fresh match to his pipe.

"Moderation," liquidly pealed in the voice of Captain Leezur—"moderation 's the rewl——"

"'N' I'll tell ye of another optional act o' ourn 't ye repeals; but ye can tell 'em 't we git it jest the same—though it 's racktified 'tell it 's p'ison."

"Ye can't all'as git it, even racktified," said Shamgar: "onct when the boat wa'n't in for a couple o' weeks, I got kind o' desp'rit over a pain in my chist; hadn't nothin' but two bottles o' 'Lightnin' External Rheumatiz Cure,' so I took 'em straight. They said 't for a spell thar' I was the howlin'est case o' drunk they ever see."

"The wu'st case o' 'nebr'ancy this State 's ever known," said Captain Dan Kirtland, "was a man up to Callis jail, 't had been 'bleedged to take a spree

on 'lemon extract;' he sot fire t' everything he could lay his hand to."

"Look a' that, will ye?" said Captain Pharo to the haughty Washingtonian; "yit you don't know nothin' 'bout ructions. You can repeal every optional act 't a man makes, but you ain't got no idee o' ructions——"

Captain Pharo's voice had now reached such a pathetic and eloquent pitch that Captain Judah left his trumpet in the ball-room and joined us, in time to mingle with the cheers that were still further discomfiting the high and hot-headed young man.

"What you talkin' about?" retorted the latter through his dazzling white teeth. "I'm not in politics."

"Why didn't ye say so, then?" said Captain Pharo calmly, "and not keep me standin' here wastin' my breath on ye?"

"Moderation," sweetly chimed in the voice of Captain Leezur—"moderation in all things, even as low down as passnips."

The man who had been in California had been constantly drawing near me, but Captain Judah, anticipating him, was already at my side.

"You're a stranger," said he: "perhaps you never heard any of Angie Fay—Angie Fay Kobbe's poetry?"

He had a rosy face: in spite of former long seawear, not blowzed, but delicately tinted; he snuffled when he talked in a way which I could only define

as classical; and it was admitted that his nosegay vest and blue coat, as far as tender refinement went, far surpassed anything in the room.

"That 's Angie Fay Kobbe, my wife, at the organ. Ten years ago, when I was still cruising, I found and rescued her from a southern cyclone!"

I murmured astonishment, though in truth something of a cyclonic atmosphere still hovered about Mrs. Kobbe, not only in her method of performance on the organ, but in her sparkling features, young and beautiful, her wide-flowing curled hair.

"How old does she seem to you to be, sir?"

"She looks to me," I said, with honesty, "to be eighteen or twenty—twenty-five at the most."

"Sir, she is forty!" said Captain Judah proudly. Angie Fay shot him a bewitching glance through the open door.

"She is not only a skilled performer on the keys, as you see, but she is a wide-idead thinker. If it would not detain you, sir, against previous inclination to the ball-room, I should like to read you some of her poetry."

Glances too oppressed by awe to contain envy were cast upon me by my former companions from afar; even the man who had been in California was retreating in baffled dismay.

"This first," said Captain Judah, drawing a roll from his pocket, "though brief, has been called by many wide-idead thinkers a 'rounded globe of pathos:' men, strong men, have wept over it. It has had a yard built around it; in other words, it

has been framed, and hung in many a bereaved household; let me read:

"'Farewell, my husband dear, farewell!
Adieu! farewell to you.
And you, my children dear, adieu!
Farewell! farewell to thee!
Adieu! farewell! adieu!'

"Were you looking for your handkerchief, sir?"

"Yes," said I, accidentally swallowing whole a nervine lozenge which Captain Leezur had given me.

"This," said Captain Judah, with an expressive smile, as he opened another roll, "if you will excuse the egotism, refers to an experience of my own. I was once, when master of a whaler, nearly killed in a conflict with a whale; in fact, I am accustomed to speak of it paradoxically—or shall I say hyperbolically—as 'The time when I was killed!' My account of it made a great impression upon Angie; but I will read:

"'Upon the deep and foaming brine,
My Judah's blood was spilled.
The anguished tears gush from my eyes.
O Judah, *wast* thou killed?

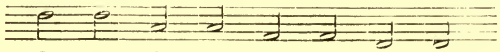
"'Had I beheld that awful scene,
I should have turned me pale,
My eyes were mercifully hence,
When Judah killed the whale.'

"It was I, so to speak, that was killed," said Captain Judah, with his peculiar smile; "the whale escaped. But for the sake of symphony, Angie has

used that poetic license, familiar, as you know, to wide-idead thinkers. Or let me read you this——"

Dimmer and dimmer grew the faces of my former jovial company; but I had one friend, stout, even for this emergency.

I heard a voice coming—

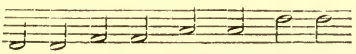


Judah! Judah! Judah! drop 'er, I say, an' come along!" Captain Pharo winked.

"On some other occasion, sir," said Captain Judah, returning the roll to his pocket with cheerful haste, "I shall be happy."

Almost before I was aware that I was liberated, the shifty spectre, whose basilisk eye had not released me, stood at my side.

"You oughter have seen," he began, "the time 't I was killed in Californy——"



Major! major! major! drop 'er, I say, an' come along, by clam!"

There was naught to do, in Captain Pharo's exalted frame of mind, but to follow the commanding flower; but when that had become once more congenially distracted I returned to the ball-room to observe there.

The dancers were at rest, and Angie Fay too, the stewards serving them with refreshments; but Fluke

and Gurdon were playing softly together on their violins, Fluke with waved hair on his forehead, Gurdon with still brow. Vesty had taken up her sleeping child and was holding him. The Basins loved sad music, low, mournful lullabys on the wind; they listened.

I listened so deeply, so strangely, it was like the awaking from a dream when I heard Notely and his guests inviting the dancers again to the floor.

"Good-night, major," Vesty whispered kindly, coming to me. She had her shawl wrapped over herself and her infant, and was departing quietly with her father-in-law, Captain Rafe.

"I—I didn't get one eye-beam from her the whole evenin'—no, by Jove! Note," said "Sid," watching that gently retreating figure; "not one! And she just now leaned over and showered a whole peck of 'em on that poor little——"

"Hush!" said Notely.

I witnessed with some sadness how Captain Pharo and Captain Judah were walking the room, arm-in-arm, Captain Judah reading from some of Angie Fay's most affecting strains, and Captain Pharo willingly melted to tears thereat.

"Read that ag'in, Judah," I heard Captain Pharo snivel, as they were passing me.

Then I heard the melodramatic snuffle of that "Adieu! farewell! adieu!"

Still farther down the room sobs were echoed back to me from Captain Pharo's bursting heart.

So that I was gratified, at the next round, to hear

Captain Pharo declare that he felt the necessity of going home at once to have a copy of the verses made and "a ya-ard built around 'em, Judah."

Most of the Basins had gone; there were still some of the prettiest girls upon the floor, not with proper Basin escort, but with Notely's broadcloth guests, who were whispering sweet words of adulation to tingling, unaccustomed ears.

"Come!" Gurdon whispered to Fluke; "we should give up playing at this hour, and take those girls home."

Fluke shook his head. "Go home, you," he said: "one fiddle is enough! If we want a merry time, don't bother."

Gurdon stayed patiently, but with a brow waxing determined. The flattered girls, the broadcloth guests cast unwelcome glances at him.

"Go home, Gurd!" said Fluke, at last. "You spoil it all with a face like that. Go on, and don't mind us, or you and I shall quarrel."

"Not till those girls are ready to be taken home," said Gurdon.

Fluke threw down his fiddle with an oath. "I said that you and I should quarrel."

"I would not strike my twin-brother for all the false men and foolish girls in Christendom!" said Gurdon, standing before Fluke's threat, with folded arms, and such a look at him that Fluke came to himself, wincing.

"We may as well go home," he said sulkily.

The young men of the world watched this scene

with amusement not untempered with choler, while they proceeded elaborately to assist the pretty Basins, who were wrapping themselves in their thin shawls.

"I fancy we are not to be trusted to escort these young ladies home?" said "Sid," with an elegant sarcastic inclination toward Gurdon.

"No," said poor Gurdon stonily. For he had played for them with a gracious heart all the evening, and it was hard to be hated. But he marshalled his flock away without flinching.

XV

THE BROTHERS

"THERE 's got to be a new deal to me in this world pretty soon," said Wesley, "or I shall kick."

I found him among the clam flats, leaning his spent and hopeless being on his rake.

"What is it, Wesley?"

"Belle O'Neill got me to help her set a trap to ketch a mink and a fox; she said we should git two dollars apiece; and we caught—we caught Miss Pray's tom-cat!"

Wesley rubbed his grimy hand across his eyes.

"She scolded awful and told us to go down to the clam flats and not to come home till we'd got two bushels o' clams for the hens. Fast as I get a roller full and go over and emp'y 'em on the bank the crows come 'n' eat 'em up—look a' there!"

I saw.

"Wesley, your load does seem greater than you can bear." He wore trousers of a style prevalent among the Basins, of meal sacks; only his were not shaped at all—there was simply a sack for each leg, tied with gathering strings at the ankles. His jacket was as much too small for his stout little person as his trousers were voluminous; and Miss

Pray, who was artistic by freaks, had made it with an impertinent little tail like a bird's tail.

Wesley was not only afflicted, he was ludicrous in the face of high heaven.

"There 's got to be a new deal," blubbered he, with his fist in his eyes, "or I shall kick."

"*Could* you kick in those trousers, Wesley?" I said.

He regarded me curiously, then replied with evident faith: "I could, nights."

"Ah! I'm so lame that I couldn't even kick much, nights, Wesley."

His countenance changed from its self-pity; he removed the fist from his eyes. "I've always wondered," he said, "'t you didn't kick more."

"Where is Belle O'Neill?"

"I told 'er 't she'd got me to set the trap, 'nd she orter, 't least, keep the crows off'n the clams; but she went over to Lunette's and borrowed the book, 'n' she's settin' there in the graves, where Miss Pray can't see her, readin' it."

I sighed to think how early, among his other trials, Wesley was learning the frailties of the lovable sex.

"I will go up and keep the crows off of the clams for you, Wesley."

"I think," said Wesley innocently, his face expressing a kindlier gratitude than his words conveyed, "'t you could scare 'em off first-rate!"

While I reclined on the green bank, not far from the clams, a solemn and fearful reprehension to the

crows, I heard Belle O'Neill's voice reading to herself aloud among the graves. The Basins possessed but one secular volume, which they were accustomed to lend from house to house, and which was designated without confusion as "the book."

Belle O'Neill, peeping out from the graves, saw me, and came forward, blushing timidly. Wesley rose from the clam flats and hissed at her for her treachery, but she was very fair, and I received her kindly.

"Major Henry," said she, "will you show me what this means, please?"

She sat down close to me—for nobody minded me—and put her finger on the place.

Now "the book," though jointly purchased by the Basins from a travelling salesman, as a highly illuminated volume, promising much of a lively nature, had turned out to be to an altogether unexpected degree serious and didactic.

I followed Belle O'Neill's finger.

"Impressive Lesson.
Perishableness!"

"What does it mean?" said the girl, with pale, inquiring lips.

Now as I loved the courtly valor of my race, I laughed.

"You do not understand those long words, Belle. It means, in those peculiar words, something about a Jack-o'-lantern."

"Oh," said Belle, gazing at it with sudden refreshment, "I guess it 's the only funny one in the book! They're usually so solemn."

We turned to the next page:

"Important Lesson.
Discontent.
The Bachelor's Button that wanted to be a sunflower: the scow that wanted to be a schooner."

"Why," said Belle, with her finger on the cut of the angry and resentful bachelor's button that was throwing down its petals because it could not be a sunflower—"why did it want to be a sunflower?"

"I can't imagine," I said.

"Wouldn't you just as soon be a bachelor's button as a sunflower?"

"Well, I don't know," I murmured; but while I affected still to be pondering this subject doubtfully, Wesley came up from the clam flats.

He pointed to the cut on the opposite page:

"Warning Lesson.
Slothfulness."

A plump and evidently highly contented maiden was here represented as lolling on a sofa.

"'T means *lazy*. She looks jest like Belle O'Neill, don't she?" said Wesley, grinning maliciously.

"Who"—flamed up Belle O'Neill—"put straws into the cow's teats, an' let the milk run, while he laid out on the grass an' slep', and Miss Pray found it out and flailed him with the broomstick?"

Wesley's grin froze on his features; he returned wearily to his rake.

"Comforting Lesson.
A saint walking among the saved, on Revival Terrace."

But the saint, though tall and bearded, wore a ball dress such as the unchastened belles of society sport upon earth, a profuse skirt, with flashing train; and he was walking quite alone.

"Where are the 'saved'?" said Belle, with ghastly hope.

"They are just around the corner," said I cheerfully; "where that suggestion of clouds is—see!"

"N-no, but I guess they are. Ain't he the lookin'est thing you ever saw?"

"Quite the lookin'est!"

Belle giggled. I bore her out in it sympathetically.

Wesley, who observed how we were at least keeping the crows off of the clams, smiled upon us with feeble indulgence.

But as we read on, Belle did come to a lesson of such useful terror that she decided to take her rake and assist Wesley among the flats.

I approved her, and lay back, smiling, in the sun.

I heard Wesley's little old voice pipe up, considerately: "You'll scare 'em jest as well if you do go to sleep, major."

I kept on smiling. The sun seemed a lake of glory and I a boatman, fair and free, sailing vast distances upon it with just one stroke of my wand-oar—and here I began to scare the crows unconsciously.

The air of the Basin anon exhilarated one, anon soothed one into wondrous, deep, peace-drunken slumber.

When I awoke Vesty stood over me, calling me.

There was a purple, dark sky—now but little after mid-day—glowing with red at the edges like a sunset; the wind was blowing strong. It was dark, yet all was distinct about me. I sprang to my feet with a sort of solemn exultation and bared my head.

"Wake, major, wake!" Vesty cried to me. She drew me and pointed out to sea. "Notely's boat—it was trying to make home—it is on the reefs."

I saw it then by a flash of that unearthly light, the wind descending like the last of days. I hastened with Vesty to the low beach, where the people were moving strangely, looking out on the sea with its swift-crested breakers.

From the yacht, beating helpless on the ledges, Notely and the few who had sailed with him that morning were putting out the life-boat; but Captain Rafe kept running his weather-stained hand down his white face, his head shaking.

"Bare chance t' save half of 'em in the gale—

they'll swamp her: nay, nay, they'll never get her home with that freight; and it 's no sea—it 's a hericane, above and below. I see the sky in broad day like that but once before, and then——"

His voice was hushed, the boat was off, was lost; then once again we saw her; we felt the gale rushing; when we could see again, there were a few struggling in the waves, a few climbing back upon the sinking masts of the vessel, with wild signals.

The little Basin boats were old and frail; only Gurdon had lately been building a new fishing-boat. While we were looking off he had been hauling it down the steep bank by the cottage.

Now when we saw him Vesty ran to him and put the child in his arms and clung to him. I saw a great light come over his face.

"Gurd," said his father sternly, the old stained hand still stroking his white face, "ye have strength and skill above the most—but look at yon! Put up your boat, lad; it 's no use. Moreover, there are five men yonder on the masts—your boat, tested in an ordinar' sea, holds but five alone!"

"Will ye go out jest to give them another chance to wrack themselves, and ye put yerself by to drown?" said another, with a trembling, half-ferocious laugh. "Look to yer wife and child. Don't be a fool!"

"There 's not one o' ye," cried Gurdon, "but if ye had a boat fit 'u'd do all ye could, an' men sinkin' and a-wavin' ye like that—let me off! There 's no other way——"

His voice broke. He looked at his wife and child, a look the woman understood for all eternity.

Vesty stood like marble; her shawl had escaped from her own throat, but was warm about the child that Gurdon had placed back on her breast.

As we waited, watching, transfixed, Fluke came running breathless from the woods where he had been as guide with the party of Notely's pleasure-seekers who had stayed behind that morning.

Captain Rafe ran to him, with the hand still stroking his pallid face: "That was Gurdon out there, making so near the sinking boat—he would go—only five——"

But Fluke heard never a word. He saw; his face flushed with a kind of mad joy; he tossed his hair back, and leaping into the waves, swam to his own frail little fishing-boat that was tossing at anchor.

His voice leaped back to us above the tumult of the wind: "Gurd and me'll come home together!"

There was a lull in the gale; the five were put off from the sinking craft in Gurdon's boat.

And the men were standing with ropes on the shore; but I only saw, as the tempest moaned, to swell again, one figure on a bending mast, between sea and sky, and one in a frail shell toiling toward him.

The tempest fell and smote. Then did nothing seem to me fated underneath those awful heavens, but grand and free; freest, mightiest of all that figure imprisoned between storm and cloud, overwhelmed, buried——triumphant, imperishable! Then did the

dead that I had known come forth and walk upon the waves before me: and I beheld that they were not dead, but glorious and strong—that, rather, I was dead.

Then all seemed black about me. I would have clutched at somewhat, but I felt a cold hand grasp mine in appealing agony. They brought in with ropes through the breakers the five men who had neared the shore in the young sailor's new fishing-boat.

But the "Twin Brothers," the sublime figure on the mast, the toiling figure in the boat, had "gone home together!"

XVI

THE POPLAR LEAVES TREMBLE

It was Vesty's hand that had wrung mine. Captain Rafe, after he lost his sons, hardly spoke without drawing his own trembling hand along his piteous face.

"Notely fell from the mast and was stunted; they put him in the boat: else he wouldn't 'a' come and left my Gurd, I b'lieve." Tears rolled down his cheeks.

Vesty spoke to me so softly, as if her head were turned, or she were wandering in a dream. "When Gurdon had anything that anybody needed, and they asked him for it, he always gave it them. So they asked him for his life—and he gave that!"

Notely, on recovering consciousness, had been carried to his house at the Neck: by the next morning they had his mother with him; he was in a fever.

Would Vesty remember now the promise she had asked of Mrs. Garrison?

At all events, the sick man babbled deliriously of past days, had fallen from the rock once more, and would have Vesty to nurse him: "where," asking ever, "is Vesty?"

Mrs. Garrison herself went to her, pleading his pain and danger. Vesty came.

"Hello! we're saved!—the Vesty!" cried Notely, whose fever had been plunging him in cold sea-waves, his voice a feeble echo of its old gay tone, as he put up his hand to her.

So ashy and sunken was his face, Vesty took him on her arm as she would her child; he fell asleep.

"Vesty stops the pain—no one lifts me like Vesty—sing, Vesty!" from pathetic lips and wandering blue eyes that would die if one recalled them to their sorrow.

"Only stay," said Mrs. Garrison. "His life hangs upon it. Surely you are not afraid to have your child with me?"

Her heart was full of tenderness for the girl. "I would die rather than anything should happen to your child, Vesty," she cried, with a sincere impulse.

Vesty lifted those Basin eyes.

"Oh, he is not old enough yet to understand my worldliness," said Mrs. Garrison, with bitter lips.

For, from entrusting the child at first to her servants, while Vesty was in the sick-room, Mrs. Garrison had grown to have a jealous care for him herself. He had taken an occasion, and he had conquered her.

When she pleased him he dimpled and gave her, on appeal, an ostentatious kiss, composed wholly of noise and vanity. When she first displeased him he had tried conclusions with her by unhesitatingly administering a slap on the face.

Mrs. Garrison, the select and haughty, tingling from this direct Basin blow, watched the flame die out of the baby's eyes, in astonishment, not in anger. The blow felt good to her. Vesty treated her, though unconsciously, from such a height.

"My darling," she said sorrowfully, lifting the child in her arms, "would you hurt me, when I love you so?"

A bit of sugar sealed the reconciliation: while he devoured it little Gurdon leaned his head in tender remorse upon Mrs. Garrison's neck. She had handsome eyes—for him, full only of love and longing—and he saw strange tears in them. He never treated her again to corporeal punishment; while she, on her part, indulged him fully.

The attachment was so marked between them that he would, when he was well and had dined, very cheerfully leave Vesty for her society, to Vesty's secret chagrin and Mrs. Garrison's beating heart of joy.

"Do you mean to say that you will take the child back again—back to that squalid home—yes, for such it is, Vesty—that you will deprive him of all that might be, and give him up to a fisherman's wretched life and dreary fate?"

"Will you make a better man of him in the world than his father was?" said Vesty simply.

"You know that I worship Gurdon Rafe's memory," cried Mrs. Garrison, with adroit heat. "What do you think would please him best for his wife and child—misery and cold with an old man who could

have a better home among his own kin, had he not to make the effort to support you—or happiness and warmth and love, and a great sphere of usefulness, happiness, and education for his child?"

"You see," said Vesty, on the plain Basin path, "in trying to get those things we might miss the only—the greatest—thing, that Gurdon had. I'd rather my boy should learn to have that, and miss all the others."

"O my dear! you shall teach your child, you shall be always with him. I have some things to remember and regret, Vesty. I promise you solemnly—and I do not break my word—I will not interfere. You shall teach and guide your child as you will."

Notely was awake and calling.

"Go to him," said Mrs. Garrison, excitement in her eyes; "he will explain to you, my child." There was a tenderness, a hope, a voluptuousness of sweet earthly things in her manner toward the poor girl now, which all her life Vesty had missed.

Heart and flesh were weary, and Notely, who had been the light of her life once, looked up at her with that weight of sorrow, so much darker and heavier than her own; so much heavier because it was dark.

"Help me to bear it!" he said.

She understood all; she laid her head beside him, sobbing.

"Vesty, you know the doctors say that I shall live; but—now that I am sane again, I do not know why I should wish to live."

She put her hand on his. Alas! in spite of reckless wandering and tragedy, and forsaken faith and duty, the touch only thrilled him with his own dreams as of old.

"Listen, Vesty!—just as you used to be my little woman and reason with me. Ugh! how weak I am! I'm not worth saving. It is of little consequence, truly; but, such as it is, it all lies with you. Some time, Vesty—I am speaking of what must be some time, dearest; and remember, it is often done in the world, among those who are highest and richest and socially recognized—well, it is a familiar thing: as soon as it can be well arranged—and that soon, now—my wife and I shall be divorced. We have both wished it, we are unhappy together, it is a wrong for us to live together. She has been untrue enough to me, as I to her, but let that pass; such things are not for your ears to hear, only you need have no qualms. Grace will be more congenially wedded within two months after we are parted.

"And then—Vesty? Well, will you not speak to me? Is it to be life and honor, with your love at last, or despair and death? You were promised to me once. In spite of all, you cannot hold yourself your own; you are mine; the wife God meant for me. O Vesty! let us blot out the confused past with all its mistakes! It is killing me—will kill me body and soul if you leave me now. Let me find my lost home at last: let me rest a little while before I die!"

His weak and gasping breath warned her; she

stilled his hands, the low lids hiding the anguish in her eyes.

So there was a way out of it all, easy, luxurious, convenient for the passions! And there was a straight Basin way, a high promise before God and man, that, to the Basin sense, there was no taking back: Vesty could not see upon any other road; she shuddered.

But Notely's wasted, broken life clinging to her!

"That was never done among the Basins, Notely. When we are married we promise, and we hold to it till death. It would never seem to me that I was your wife, but wicked and false to you and her—always that. I would rather die!"

"My Vesty, the Basin is a little, little part of the world, and ignorant of life. I tell you what is right. You used to have faith in me—so much that, if you would, you might still believe in me and my ceaseless love for you. Do you think that I will ever leave you here? My mother wants you and the child: we will be happy together at last, with such quiet or such pleasures as you will. My quarries are turning out wealth for me—it is for you and Gurdon's child. Think of Gurdon's little boy!"

As he spoke, Vesty seemed to see again a pale face with a great light upon it, turning without question to its stern duty.

"Notely, Gurdon gave me up, and the baby that he worshipped; though I clung to him, he put us by, because, though it was hard, it was right—it was the only way. I think it is often so between those two,

the right and what we want. I think that love, somehow, in this world seems to be putting by—putting by what we want."

Vesty struggled again in her dim way.

"Why need it be?" cried Notely sharply. He raised himself on the pillows as if stung; a deep crimson rushed to his cheeks.

"It is," said Vesty sadly, quietly—"it is. What we want—putting by. Do you think I did not care for you?"

His haggard face turned to her.

"Will not always care for you? But you will never be a great man till you can put by what you want, when they stand against each other, for what is right, though it be hard. Then one would not only admire and love you; they would trust you to death's door, though all the way was hard."

Notely had no answer for the tongue-loosed Basin. Besides, her words had comforted him, her tears fell on him.

"I do not think," she said, with a look and voice of such tenderness, as though it were her farewell, "that it was all to us, that I should marry you, or you should marry me—until we could live brave and true, though we lost one another, and follow the only way we saw, though it was hard. I do not believe we should have been happy—without that—after a little while.

"I could not love you if you left your wife and married me. I should never trust you. I would rather we should both die. Go back to her and win

her with your own love and kindness, and be true to her, and I shall never lose my love for you."

"Do you know what love is?" said Notely, with clinched teeth, tears springing from between the wasted fingers pressed against his eyes. "Do you know what it is to suffer?"

She gave him no flaming retort. She put her head beside him.

The past came back to him, and her poor, burdened, self-sacrificing life. Wild sobs shook his heart. "All lost! all lost!" he moaned.

"No, only not found yet," she said, looking at him through her tears; "all waiting."

It was such a simple Basin path, knowing so few things, but unswerving.

"Not here, I know," she said, "for nothing is for long or without loss and sorrow here. There is always somebody sick or hurt; and the poplar trees, that the cross was made from, are always trembling and sighing: but some time Christ will lay his hand upon them, and they will be still and blessed again."

XVII

GOIN' TO THE DAGARRIER'S

"EVER sence the accident," said Captain Pharo, with a gloom not wholly impersonal, "my woman 's been d'tarmined to haul me over to a dagarrier's to have my pictur' took.

"I told 'er that there wa'n't no danger in the old 'Lizy Rodgers,' sech weather as I go out in. 'But ye carn't never tell,' says she; 'and asides,' says she, 'ye're a kind o' baldin' off an' dryin' away, more or less, every year,' says she, 'an' I want yer pictur' took afore——'

"Gol darn it all!" said Captain Pharo, making an unsuccessful attempt to light his pipe, and kicking out his left leg testily.

"'Afore ye gits to lookin' any meachiner,' says she.

"'When I dies,' says I, 'th' inscription on my monniment won't be by no drowndin',' says I; 'it'll be jest plain, "Pestered ter death," ' says I.

"Wal, 't that she began a-boohooin', so in course I told 'er, says I, 'I s'pose I c'n go and have my dagarrier took ef you're so set on it,' says I.

"For with regards t' female grass, major, my exper'ence has all'as made me think o' that man in

Scriptur' 't was told to do somethin'. 'No, by clam!' says he, 'I ain't a-goin' to,' and hadn't more 'n got the words outer his mouth afore somehow he found himself a-shutin' straight outer the front door to go to executin' of it.

"When I thinks o' that tex'—an' I ponders on it more 'n what I does on mos' any other tex' in Scriptur'—I says to myself, 'Thar' 's Pharo Kobbe—thar' 's my dagarrier, 'ithout no needs o' goin' nowheres to have it took."

"I should think it would be very nice," I said, "to have somebody wanting your picture.—I am not pressed with entreaties for mine."

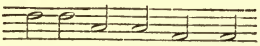
Captain Pharo sighed kindly; his pipe was going.

"Poo! poo! hohum! Never mind; never mind.

"'My days are as the grass, Or as—'

I s'pose ye hain't never worked yerself up to the p'int o' propoundin' nothin' yit to Miss Pray, have ye?"

"No."



"'Or as the morning flow'r,—

"Why don't ye, major?"

"When I think of how much better off she is with seven dollars a week for my board than she would be taking me as a husband, for nothing——"

"Oh, pshaw! major, pshaw!" said Captain Pharo, with deep returning gloom; "seven dollars a week ain't nothin' to the pleasure she'd take, arfter she'd

once got spliced onto ye, in houndin' on ye, an' pesterin' ye, an' swipin' the 'arth with ye."

Conscious that he had rather over-reached himself in presenting this picture of marital joys to my horizon, Captain Pharo resumed the subject with sprightliness.

"In course the first preliminary essence o' all these 'ere ructions 'ith female grass is, 't ye've got to go a-co'tin'."

"Yes."

"And in goin' a-co'tin', ye've got to ile yer ha'r out some, an' put essence on yer han'kercher, an' w'ar a smile continnooal, an' keep a-arskin' 'em ef tobakker smoke sickens on 'em, an' all sech o' these ere s'ciety flourishes an' gew-gaws 's that."

"Yes," said I, attentively.

"I'd ort ter know," said Captain Pharo, alone with me in the lane, assuming a gay and confident air, "f'r I've been engaged in co'tin' three times, an' ain't had nary false nibble, but landed my fish every time."

"I know you have."

"Now ef you don't feel rickless enough, major, and kind o' wanter see how it 's done, you ask Miss Pray t' sail along with us up to Millport, whar I've got to go to have my condum' pictur' took."

The recollection of personal grievances again beclouded Captain Pharo; he was silent.

"And what?" I said.

"Wal," said my soul's companion, with the fire all gone from his manner, "I'll kinder han' 'er into

the boat, an' shake my han'kercher at 'er an' smile, when Mis' Kobbe ain't lookin', an' the rest o' these ere s'ciety ructions, jest t' show ye how."

I appreciated the motives, the sacrifice even, of this conduct as anticipated toward Miss Pray, whose society, as far as his own peculiar taste went, Captain Pharo always rather tolerated than affected.

Still, it was with doubtful emotions, on the whole, that I wended my steps with Miss Pray toward the enterprise.

The scow "Eliza Rodgers" was waiting for us at anchor among the captain's flats. We went first to the house.

There it became at once evident to me that, rather than preparing himself with oil and incense for the occasion, Captain Pharo had been undergoing severe and strict manipulations at the hands of his wife. He had on the flowered jacket, but as proof against the sea air until he should be photographed, Mrs. Kobbe had applied paste to the locks of hair flayed out formidably each side of his head beyond his ears.

Altogether, I could not but divine that during my absence his flesh had been growing more and more laggard to the enterprise, his spirit testy and unreconciled.

"'F I can't find my pipe I shan't go," said he, with secret source of sustainment; "stay t' home 'nless I c'n find my pipe, that 's sartin as jedgment."

Now I knew from the way the captain's hand reposed in his pocket that his treasure was safely hidden there—that he was dallying with us. Knowing,

too, that he could not escape by such means, but was only weakly delaying his fate, I took occasion to whisper in his ear, as I affected to join in the search:

"Take her out, captain, and light her up. Let 's go through with it. Remember you promised to show me how to act."

"Hello! why, here she is a-layin' right on the sofy," said he, in a tone of forlorn acquiescence that could never have recommended him to the footlights, especially as this remark antedated, by some anxious breathings on my part, the sheepish and bungling withdrawal of his pipe from his pocket.

"Captain Pharo Kobbe," said his wife, regarding him, "ain't you a smart one!"

The captain's manner certainly did not justify this taunt. As he led us, with an exaggerated limp, toward the beach, I looked in vain for any of those light and elegant attentions toward Miss Pray at which he had hinted. But when we arrived in view of the "Eliza Rodgers" and saw that the tide had so far receded that we must pick our way gingerly thither over the mud flats, by stepping on the sparsely scattered stones, Captain Pharo looked at me and took a stand.

"Miss Pray," said he, "'f it 's agreeable to you, I'll hist ye up an' carry on ye over."

"Cap'n Pharo Kobbe," said his wife, as if it were suddenly and startlingly a subject of physics, "whatever is the matter with you?"

"Carn't I be p'lite ef I want to?" roared the cap-

tain; but as he surveyed his contemplated burden, who was a good many inches taller than he, and by all odds sprightlier, he paled.

"Ef 't you *could* get anything, Cap'n Kobbe," said his wife, "I sh'd think you had."

This unblessed dark reminder of a causeless deprivation settled it. Captain Pharo seized Miss Pray, blushing with alarm and amaze at such sudden retributive lightning on the part of her long-delayed charms, and bore her out into the mud.

But he had labored but a few steps with her, giving vent meanwhile to audible, involuntary groans, before it became evident to her, or to them both, that his grasp was failing, his feet sinking. She threw up a hand and partly dislodged his pipe; it was instantly a question of dropping his pipe or Miss Pray; the captain dropped Miss Pray.

Both women were now angry with him; between all that sea and sky Captain Pharo appeared not to have a friend save his pipe and me.

Miss Pray indignantly picked the rest of her steps alone. "Ye'll have to do the rest o' yer co'tin' in yer own way," murmured the captain to me, darkly and vaguely, as he stepped into the boat: "but my 'dvice to ye is, drop it! drop it right whar 'tis!"

"Oh, that is all right," I tried to assure him. "I —I hadn't hardly begun, you know."

We scoured the bottom successfully with the "Eliza Rodgers," but as we got into deep water there fell a perfect calm.

"'T 'd be bad enough," said Captain Pharo, set

against the world, and tugging wrathfully at the oars, "t' go on sech idjit contractions as these 'ith a breeze t' set sail to, but when 't comes to pullin' over thar' twenty mile, with the sea as flat as a floor, t' have yer darn fool pictur' took——" He laid down the oars with an undoubted air of permanency, and lit his pipe.

Mrs. Kobbe pressed her handkerchief to her eyes. "Cap'n Pharo Kobbe, them 't knew you afore ever I was born say as 't you was the best master of a vessel 't ever sailed, and everybody knows 't you can sail this coast in the dark, an' though—though you did act queer a little while ago, I don't—don't like to have you call yourself a da—darn fool."

Captain Pharo glanced at me with suicidal despair.

Mrs. Kobbe and Miss Pray took out their knitting, with the implicit Basin superstition of "knitting up a breeze." They as seriously advised me to "scratch the mast and whistle," which, agreeably, I began to do.

Thus occupied, I saw a sudden light break over the captain's face, as sighting something on the waves.

"Fattest coot I've seen this year, by clam!" said he, seizing his gun from the bottom of the scow and firing. He fired again, and then rowed eagerly up to it. It was a little wandering wooden buoy bobbing bird-like on the waters.

We did not look at him. Mrs. Kobbe and Miss Pray knitted; I scratched the mast with painful diligence.

A breeze arose. The captain silently hoisted sail; at length he lit his pipe again, and returned, in a measured degree, to life.

As we sailed thus at last with the wind into Millport it seemed that the "Eliza Rodgers" and we were accosted as natural objects of marvel and delight by the loafers on the wharf.

"What po-ort?" bawled a merry fellow, speaking to us through his hands.

"Why, don't ye see?" said a companion, pointing to Captain Pharo, who was taking down sail, with the complete flower turned shoreward; "they're Orientiles!"

A loud burst of laughter arose. Personal allusions equally glove-fitting were made to Mrs. Kobbe, to Miss Pray, to me, and to the "Eliza Rodgers."

"Say! come to have your pictures took?" bawled the first merry fellow, as the height of sarcasm and quintessence of a joke.

"Look a' here, major," almost wept poor Captain Pharo, "how in thunder 'd they find that out?"

"Never mind," said I; "we're going up to the hotel, and we'll have a better dinner than they ever dreamed of."

"Afore I'm took to the dagarrier's?"

"Yes, indeed."

"See here, wife!" said Captain Pharo, completely broken down—for we were all suffering, as usual, from the generic emptiness and craving of our natures for food—"major says 't we're goin' up to git baited, afore I'm took to the dagarrier's."

"I wish 't you could have your picture took jest as you look now, Captain Pharo Kobbe!" exclaimed his wife kindly and admiringly.

At the inn the most conspicuous object in the reception-room was a sink of water, with basins for ablutions.

Captain Pharo waited, visibly holding the leash on his impatience, for a "runner"—or travelling salesman—to complete his bath, when he plunged in gleefully, face and hands. Mrs. Kobbe drew him away with dismay. The paste that had endured the whole sea voyage he had now ruthlessly washed from one side of his head, the locks on the other side still standing out ebullient.

"'M sorry, wife," said the captain. But the captain, smelling the smoke from the kitchen, was not the forlorn companion of our treacherous voyage. "I reckon she'll stan' out ag'in, mebbe," said he, "soon 's she 's dry." But he winked at me with daring inconsequence.

In vain Mrs. Kobbe tried to flay out those locks to their former attitude with the hotel brush and comb, which the runner had finally abandoned.

"Poo! poo! woman, never mind," said the captain; "one side 's fa'r to wind'ard, anyhow. I can have a profiler took, jest showin' one side on me, ye know."

"I didn't want a profiler," lamented Mrs. Kobbe; "I wanted a full-facer."

"Wal, wal, woman, I hain't washed my face off, have I?" said the captain cheerfully, resurrecting

his pipe. "Put up them thar' public belayin' pins," he added, referring to the hotel brush and comb, "and don't le's worry 'bout nothin' more, 'long as we're goin' to be baited."

The "runner" meanwhile was looking at us with the pale, scientific interest of one who covets curiosities which he yet dare not approach too intimately.

"Do you smoke before eating, sir?" said he to the captain, at the same time standing off a little way from the elephant.

"Poo! poo!" said Captain Pharo, turning the whole flower indifferently to his questioner, and drawing a match with a slight, genteel uplifting of the leg; "I smoke, as the 'postle says, on all 'ccasions t' all men, in season an' outer season, an' 'specially when I'm a darn min' ter."

The runner, withered, vanquished by horse and foot, thereafter regarded us silently.

At the table I made haste first of all to catch the eye of our waiter, who was also the proprietor of the little inn. I pressed a wordless plea into his hand. "We are eccentric," I murmured in explanation, "and you must look well to our wants."

He winked at me as though we had been life-long cronies. "Eccentric all ye wan' ter," said he, "the more on 'er the better."

I pointed to the captain, who, the table-cloth before him, sat rigid with hunger.

"The ladies will consider the bill of fare," I said, "and request that Captain Kobbe may be first served."

"Which'll ye have—boil' salmon, corn' beef, beefsteak, veal stew, liver an' bacon?" quickly bawled the proprietor into the captain's ear.

"Sartin, sartin, fetch 'em along," said the compliant and nervy captain, "and don't stand thar' no'ratin' about 'em—'ceptin' liver," he added. "I hain't got so low down yit 's to eat liver."

The runner, sitting with a few guests at another table, served by the proprietor's daughter, gazed at us with fixed vision, not even having taken up his knife and fork, for that pale, scientific interest which absorbed him.

"I know that squar's are fash'nable," said the captain, taking up the napkin by his plate on the point of his knife and giving it an airy toss into the middle of the table; "but I'd ruther have the sea-room. Is your mess all fillers to-day, or have ye got some wrappers?"

"Wrappers? Oh, certainly — doughnuts, mince pie, apple pie, an' rhubub pie."

"Sartin, sartin; fetch 'em along. I'll try a double decker o' rhubub—I'm ruther partial to 'er. Fetch 'em all in: all'as survey yer country, ye know, afore ye lays yer turnpike. F'r all these favors, O Lord, make us duly thankful. Touch-and-go is a good pilot," mumbled the captain in a religious monotone, and began.

From this time on our table fairly scintillated with mirth and good cheer, in the midst of which, his first hunger appeased, the captain's resonant tones were frequently heard pealing through the

dining-room, singing, as if particularly, it seemed, to the edification of the pale runner, that "His days were as the grass, or as the morning flower."

I observed how Mrs. Kobbe and Miss Pray now and then warily conveyed a "doughnut" from the table to their pockets, with an air of dark declension from the moral laws. Having filled their own receptacles, they whispered me an entreaty to do the same, as we might be late with the tide and hungry on our way home. I complied in this, as in every case, gallantly; but in my very first essay was detected by the proprietor with a large edible of this description half-way to my trousers' pocket. He winked unconsciously and obligingly turned his back. Captain Pharo, however, oblivious to sense of guilt, approved my action in clear words: "Tuck in the cheese too, major," said he; "it'll do for the mouse-trap."

I was equally unfortunate when, some time after, in settling for our dinner I drew out first, instead of my purse, the very same fried cake which had formerly betrayed me; and, to add to my discomfiture, Miss Pray and Mrs. Kobbe, who had six of these stolen products each in their capacious pockets, retired into a corner, innocently giggling.

But an unexpected formidable dilemma arose when Captain Pharo, braced up to such a degree by his dinner and his pipe, declared that "He didn't know as he should be took to any dagarrier's, after all! Tide and wind both serve f'r a fa'r sail home," said he, "and I'm a-goin'."

"Not till we've been to a tobacconist's," said I, "anyway."

I purchased a quantity of smoking tobacco. With this parcel peeping enticingly from my pocket, and with persuasive argument that I could never again leave the Basin without his likeness, as aid to Mrs. Kobbe's tears, we at last seduced him up the stairs of the studio to the long-anticipated ordeal.

Now if young Mrs. Kobbe had had the discretion to keep silence! But "I wish, pa," said she, made bodeful by the agonized and even villanous aspect of the captain's usually stoical features, "'t you could look just as you did when major said he was goin' to take us up to dinner!"

"Good Lord! woman, how can I tell how I looked then? I didn't see myself, did I?"

"You looked so—so happy!" moaned Mrs. Kobbe, "and your face was all break—breaking out into a smile, and you didn't have that suf—sufferin' kinder look 't you've got now."

"I think, myself, sir," said the bland photographer—"ah! let me arrange your hair a little, just this side—or this?—which side?—ah! so—that a little less severe expression—we all have our trials, I know, but——"

"I hain't!" said the captain ferociously. "I hain't got a darn thing t' worry me. 'F my woman wants me ter have to git a boat an' row out for the 'Lizy Rodgers' on high tide, an' not git home till sun-up, I don't care. What ye screwin' my head into—hey?"

"Merely a head-rest, sir; merely an assistance toward composing the—ah—features."

"I can compose my feetur's without any darn nihilism machine back on me," said the captain; which he straightway did in a manner that froze the operator's veins.

"Has nothing pleasant occurred to you recently, sir. No—ah?"

"O Cap'n Kobbe," exclaimed his wife, with desperate fated mirth, "think o' how you shot the buoy this mornin' 'stead of a coot!"

The photographer, observing Mrs. Kobbe's face rather than his victim's, and seizing this as probably the opportune moment, transferred the captain's features to his camera.

We waited for the result. After some time our artist approached us with mincing steps and a hand thrust in his breast-pocket as if for possible recourse to defence.

In the type before us, even the gloom and wrath of the captain's countenance were lost sight of in the final skittish and disastrous arrangement, through the day's perils, of his hair.

"Ye see now what ye've done, don't ye?" said the captain to his wife.

Mrs. Kobbe came over and stood beside me.

"'T looks 'like somethin' 't the cat brought in, don't it?" said she, still gazing, pale with curiosity.

"I don't know," I said, not knowing what to say; "does she bring in a great variety?"

"Awful!" said Mrs. Kobbe. Having said which, she put up her piteous little hands to her face and began weeping as if her heart would break.

The captain, like the man that he was, took a strong new tack.

"Never mind, darlin'," said he; "ye've got me, 'n' that 's better to ye 'n all the dagarriers. We'll stompede the blasted thing, 'n' we'll go 'n' have a nice sail home.

"Ef I ever sees or hears or knows," he added to the photographer, "anywheres on the face o' this 'ere wide an' at the same time narrer 'arth, o' any o' these here dagarrier-ructions 't you've played off on me this day, bein' otherwise 'n destriyed, I sh'll take the first fa'r wind up here, an' if thar' ain't no wind I sh'll paddle, an' my settlemunt 'ith you'll be a final one. Good-arternoon."

The captain and his wife strolled down to the beach, arm in arm, Miss Pray and I following, forlorn and forgotten, behind. We saw the captain tenderly pin the shawl about his wife's neck before he left us on the windy wharf, to go out without a murmur to bring in the "Eliza Rodgers."

"How shall we get major down the slip?" I heard Mrs. Kobbe whisper anxiously to Miss Pray.

The "slip" was an inclined plane of boards, of some thirty feet in length, ending in the water; it was without steps or railing, smooth, green with sea-water and slime, and it was, at the present state of the tide, the only way of boarding the "Eliza Rodgers."

The captain now stood in the boat below, holding her to the slip.

Mrs. Kobbe and Miss Pray, leaving me with an encouraging smile, both sat themselves down, and by the simplest means of descent slid safely and swiftly down the incline, amid ringing cheers and acclamation from the wharf.

"Come on, major!" called the captain. "Touch-and-go——"

And I! Where now are my faithful henchmen, the men of mighty stature who do my bidding, the liveried giants who open the door of my carriage? The breeze blew in my face, and the "Eliza Rodgers" waited below, and I heard the rough audience from the wharf shouting that I should be up to that much!

Ay, and far more.

I sat me down with a smile: that strange and swift period of passage is still fresh in my memory; how the wind, aided by some slimy intervening objects, turned me completely about, so that I bounded at last with affectionate violence, back foremost, into the enfolding arms of my friends below; cheered, too, from the wharf, especially as, not having been able to make so judicious an arrangement of my earthly vestments as Mrs. Kobbe and Miss Pray had done, I was now a startlingly marked object of ridicule.

Little cared we. That adventure down the slip, ignominious though it was, had put fire into my heart. I entered eagerly into the captain's scheme

of hauling and rifling the Millport lobster-traps, in the convenient fog which, as if sent by heaven, hid us for a little space from the land. The blood of ancestral pirates and robbers bounded hilariously once more in my long-easeful, sluggish veins.

The floor of our boat was covered with bright sea-spoils, the fog lifted, the wind blew fair and strong. Hungry eternally, we munched our stolen fried cakes with delight.

The sun set in a spendthrift glory of state and color, the water was as if translated to celestial climes, languidly the fair moon arose.

And I—forever Vesty's face, in some dream of youth and happiness, outlying my estate; pictured, apart from me, yet new-creating me with joy. Afar off in earth-meadows, the love-note of the thrush—not for me, yet passing dear and sweet. That slender, languorous moon pointed me to humble village spires and grass-grown paths, pale lovers whispering at a rustic gate. I, poor sprite, stooped down and loved and blessed them, though I sped away to sail forever and forever on the seas!

XVIII

UNCLE BENNY SAILS AWAY TO GALILEE

Say the philosophers how, to the properly sane mind, there is no sorrow. But Vesty, only a Basin, fighting Christ's war against the flesh—Vesty had sorrow.

"It was," she confessed to me alone, I being as a ghost or confessor—"it was like pulling my heart out, to have Notely go away so. It was like taking little Gurd away—but it was the only way."

"He has gone back to his wife?"

"Yes." Vesty shivered. I had chanced to meet her in the lane, and the wind was chill.

"And what are you going to do, Vesty?"

"I am going where they want me to help." She held the thin, frayed shawl at her neck, the rosy child wrapped as usual on her arm: "there is always some one wanting me to help, and little Gurd is not so much care now but I can get along with it."

"You go out as general drudge or charwoman!" I felt my nostrils quiver and a bitter harshness in my voice.

Vesty looked at me with surprise. "I go to help," she said, "just as you helped me, with Uncle Benny, when I was sick."

"Oh, I could do"—the child knew not with what a glance I studied her face—"what it is hard to let you do, Vesty."

A gentle pallor at that, as though I had been strong and seemly in her sight; the Basin eyes fixed on me as if with a community of experience and sorrow.

"Shall you go away from the Basin this winter, as you did before?"

"I think so;" for myself, I could not look at her. "You see, I have my—'show,' that I must attend to a little in the winter: and here, exposed to the hard climate, if I were taken ill, or should be in want, there is no one who would care for me, you know."

"You should never want or suffer," cried Vesty of the Basins, "while I have two hands to work with!"

"Perhaps then," I murmured gravely, with sphinx face, "I might stay. I have to ask so much, Vesty, you see. All my life seems to be asking, not giving."

"I don't know who you are!" said she, with puzzled brow, the utter frankness of Basin speech escaping her unawares. "What I thought first, when I saw you—I never mind that now. And you are poor and all alone, and you never make anything of yourself—but somehow I always think you are pretending; somehow—I think—you are stronger than us all."

"You are a little arch-flatterer," I said; "and the Basin, out of its goodness of heart, has made me vain, that is all. It won't do. I need to sweep

some more floors and peel some more potatoes." She would not smile; she shook her puzzled head at me. "And, Vesty," I said, "where are you going now?"

"Why, to Uncle Benny's! Didn't you know?" exclaimed the girl eagerly, with whom the realities of life were always pressing, stern. "He stood out in the water, *that day*, helping get the men in, and he was around that evening, singing, without any dry clothes or fire; nobody thought, then. And you know he 's had a cough ever since, and now—he 's sick."

A thought smote me. "He won't lead the children to school any more, then?"

Vesty's lip quivered. "Come," she said; "he has asked for you."

At sight of Vesty with her child and me, Uncle Benny, to whom the shadows were coming as to the truly sane, without grief or surprise, touched his unribboned throat with feeble apology.

"I look dreadful," he murmured. That was not troubling him! He had a secret beyond all that, I saw.

"There 's been ten in to call to-day," he exulted sweetly, with folded hands of satisfaction, death's bloom high in his cheeks; "ten!—ahem!—to call."

Vesty looked at me with her sad smile. "It is because we love you, Uncle Benny," she said, "and you took—take such care of the children. Who?" she asked, for his mind was on it.

"Mother," said Uncle Benny, since he was sane

now, "and"—he mentioned a number of the living Basins, and went on, in the same tone—"and Fluke and Gurd."

Vesty looked at him with touching sorrow and despair, being troubled and not sane.

"They played," he said, his hands moving with the recollection of the melody; "they played wonderful—but sometimes it was an organ!"

"Good!" I said, Vesty stood so pale. "We are getting health, I see. We are on the straight road now."

Uncle Benny, hearing my voice, beckoned me.

"All the things in the drawer!" he said, "because you were 'flicted." His eyes shone lovingly and compassionately on me. "All for you. But go and see!"

Enough surely to relieve all physical defects! The worn and treasured blue necktie, for one thing; a little pocket hand-glass, a pin-cushion devoted to the tender ingathering of strayed and crooked pins, some sprays of mint and lavender among the rest.

I felt his eyes beaming proudly on me—treasures beautiful from long habit, now yielded in a spirit so complete and lofty! I brushed the back of my hand along my eyes, in the Basin way.

"You mustn't feel bad," said Uncle Benny, as I came back to him: "nature didn't do much for you, but it 's going to be all right. I had a talk with mother."

"I am glad of that, Uncle Benny."

"Oh, yes! it 's going to be all right." So full of

secrets! he spoke excitedly, with discreetly covered joy; "you needn't feel bad."

He lay back, lest he should say too much. And so, as he, wise, covered up his sublime knowledge among us, unwise, with smiling lips, he sank into a sleep.

Uncle Benny, dying, slept with a smile on his lips; and little Gurd, homeless, fatherless, laid in this poor habitation or in that, humbly and roughly, slept in beautiful health with a smile on his lips; and we, unwise, watched dolefully.

"You must not stay," said Vesty. "You are not used to lose your rest. I am so used to watching, and—I am not afraid. Lunette said she would come to help me before morning."

Starless, moonless darkness showed through the low window, and the candle was burning dimly on the table.

"I shall stay," I said. I had a student's knowledge of death. "He will wake soon, and then—it will be morning."

But Vesty's dear face turned to me with the sorrow of dying.

I was not used to lose my rest. I dozed faintly, with faithfully sleepless lids. In that east of heavy blackness the candle made a strange sun. The world, elsewhere so far from heaven, here at the Basin ascended to it by a common stairway, and little children and the pure of heart climbed upward without dread.

"May I go?" I said, watching them.

"If a child leads thee," said a voice.

So I looked to a little child, to take my hand, and I saw my mother's face waiting from above, and the beams of glory narrowed; it was the candle burning dimly on the table.

"Notely!" I heard a voice calling.

I started up.

"Notely!" called Uncle Benny, very sweetly and tremulously from the bed. "Where is he? I led him to school."

Vesty had gone to the door, and leaned her head there, as if to press back the unbearable anguish and pathos sweeping over her like a flood.

"Notely! Little Note! He was the handsomest of them all, but sometimes he ran away. Notely! Little Note! come home with Uncle Benny now; come home!"

"He will come," I said, going to him: "he will come home."

"Vesty! Where is she? I led her to school."

She tottered toward him and pressed her warm hands upon his, cold.

"And you," he said, trying to turn to me, lovingly, faintly, "you are one of them. I will bring you home. Sing, Vesty; sing 'Sail away——'"

"'As Christ went down the Lonesome Road'"

Vesty's voice broke.

"Sing, little one," said Uncle Benny, covering his glad secrets again with a sort of heavenly duplicity; "it 's all right—sing."

"'He left the crown and He took the cross—
Sail away to Galilee!
He left the crown and He took the cross—
Sail away to Galilee,
Sail away to Galilee!

. . . . . .

"'There 's a tree I see in Paradise——'"

"Sing, Vesty!"

"'It 's the beautiful waiting Tree of Life—
Sail away to Galilee!
It 's the beautiful——'"

Uncle Benny hushed her with an awed motion of the hand, and a look upward of unspeakable recognition—he, without doubt, seeing now, beyond us blind.

XIX

THE BASIN

"WHAT I thought first when I saw you—I never mind that now."

Vesty's words: and "You shall never want or suffer while I have hands to work with." So it seems that, at the Basin, even one poor and afflicted may have good hope to be sustained!

There was a woman once, beautiful and high, who, spurning me, would have married me for my wealth and name.

But pity is sweet and true. I am not ashamed of pity. Some time—if all things failed her—should I even say, "Vesty, could you marry me, for pity—for pity, Vesty?" For it was the thought of the Basins that compassion was greater than love, in some way the diviner side of love.

Then should I turn on her and say, sly as Captain Leezur—alas! so much slyer: "My lady! My Lady of M——; there are none, even among the rich and high, who can condescend to you; wide lands have you, you and your little son, possessions and palaces; and others you shall build where you will, only come and be pitiful where you move: the

world needs not these, but love and pity like thine, O Vesty of the Basins!"

But the time was not yet to plead my cause for pity. I shall know if ever that time comes. I have never mistaken Vesty. I wait.

"For pity"—for it is not in the power of gold or rank to exalt her. I cannot exalt her.

It is sweet to bear about with one the secret of a strange country. But, ah me! I love the Basin. I love the ragged shawl that Vesty holds at her throat. Nowhere else will the winter come so dreary and beautiful, with wild hearth fires. And Fate, bidding me hope, may crush me. As God wills. I wait.

It is but late summer now. There is a meeting.

"It 's been a very busy time o' year," said Elder Skates, with timid, inoffensive apology; "and we've ruther neglected religion lately. But I hope we've gathered here to the old school-house once more this Sunday afternoon, with a dispersition and a willin' and firm determination that as for us we will not let 'er drop."

Vesty had a native sense of the humorous, but the holy lids were down; only the mouth trembled a little. Captain Pharo and Captain Shamgar were finishing a game of croquet with the one set of those implements which the Basin possessed, dedicated for Sundays, and to the school-house yard, as being dimly understood to be a sort of Sabbatical pastime. Their voices pealed in with unconscious vigor through the open windows:

"Did ye shove her through the wire, Pharo?"

"Yis, by clam! and I'm a-comin' for ye, Shamgar, an' the next crack I git on that thar rollin' cruiser o' yourn, she'll wish she'd 'a' died las' week!"

The Basin conception of the game not being based on a spirit of emulation so much as on the cheerful clash of immediate vivid strokes, Captain Shamgar laughed loudly.

"We are now open for remarks," intimated Elder Skates feebly, afflicted but firm in his rubber boots.

After a season of respectful silence within the school-house there was a sepulchral whisper from one elderly female to another on the back seats:

"Did ye know 't Elvine had plucked her geese?"

"Sartin. She plucked 'em too clost, and they was around fryin' in the sun scand'lous; but I don't surmise as she knew no better."

"In course not. Ye know Miss Lester's boardin' some folks 't Gov'ment sent down t' inspect the lighthouse. It's a young man, an' he brought his wife, an' after he'd finished his job they liked it so well they're jest stayin' on, cruisin' 'round an' playin' tricks on each other. So, ef you'll believe me, what does that Gov'ment young man do one day but go an' bring home a passel o' snakes——"

The voice, to the eager ears of the listeners, ventured more and more upon audibility—

"An' he fixed 'em in a box in the woodshed, with a string to the cover, an' then stepped into the kindlin'-closet, holdin' the string, ter wait till the women came out, ter pull it an' then see what the ver-

dick would be! Wal, what think you—but his wife she suspicioned of 'im, an' she was around thar hidin', an' jest as soon as he stepped into the closet, afore he could pull the string, she flounced up an' fastened the door on the outside. An' she kep' 'im in there till he'd say: 'Wife, wife, there's lots o' green in my eye; but I'll make my supper on humble pie. I'll dump them snakes in the pond, dear wife; an' ef you'll only let me out I'll be good all my life."

"Wal, thar now!" said an admiring voice; "I should think she must be r'al gifted. Did he say it?"

"Yes, he got it out, somewheres along in the shank o' the evenin'. But Miss Lester says it's jest as good as bein' to the front seat in a show, the whole livin', endurin' time."

"Gov'ment pays their board, in course?"

"Sartin, and well it c'n be some use now an' then, settin' 'round there, not knowin' nothin' in this world what to do with its surplice."

A sharp peal rang through the window.

"Thar, Pharo! Ef ye want to find yerself, ye'd better start on down t' the south eend o' the Basin, 'n' negotiate around to leeward o' Leezur's breshheap; that's the d'rection yer ball was a-startin' for, las' time I seen 'er!"

"Poo! poo!" said Captain Pharo, drawing a Sunday "parlor" match explosively along his boot-leg; "jest hold on thar, Shamgar. Jest hold on till I git my old chimley here a-goin' ag'in——"

"The meetin' is open and patiently waitin' for remarks," said Brother Skates, poising himself wearily but ever enduringly on one boot.

After an appreciative silence within, the whisper finally arose once more: "But he paid her off pretty well."

"Dew tell!"

"She took 'n' hid his pipe one day, and her clo's was hangin' out on the line—she wears the mos' beautiful, 'labberotest-trimmed clo's you ever see—so what does he do but go an' git a padlock an' padlocked them clo's onto the line. 'When you git me my pipe,' says he, 'I'll unlock your wardrobe,' says he."

"Wal, I never! Ain't them ructions!"

"Did the peddler come around to your house this month?"

"He did so. I bought a pictur' 't was named 'Logan.' It's a fancy skitch, I guess, 'but I'm goin' to have that pictur', Cap'n Nason Teel,' says I, 'ef 't takes every egg the hens is ekil to from now t' deer-stalkin',' says I. It jest completely drored me somehow; it had sech a feelin' look."

"Did Nason let ye buy it?"

"Yis, he did; but he was dreadful sneakish an' j'ilous. 'It's jest a fancy skitch,' says he; "'tain't nothin' 't ever slammed around in shoes,' says he."

"I bought a pair o' black stockings," said the voice of a young matron. "I remember 'cause I wore 'em the very day that Johnny swallowed six buttons—and *smut!*—wal——" A picture too dark

for the imagination was relieved by the hum of a discussion now bravely finding voice on the male side of the house.

"There's some difference in the price of a hoss afore blueberryin' and after blueberryin', I can tell ye."

"All the difference 'twixt black an' white. Wal, thar's mos' things I can do without, but when you find me without a hoss you'll find me done 'ith trouble altogether an' stretched out ca'm an' laid on the cooler."

"Skates's raisin' a pretty good colt thar, 'ceptin' 't she's a leetle twisty in her off hin' leg. What do you consider on her worth, Skates?"

"I refused two hunderd dollars for 'er last week," said Brother Skates, in a clearly round, secular tone of voice.

"Now look a-here, Skates; that stock o' yourn's good workin'-stock, but they're tirrible hard feeders. Ef you've been offered two hunderd dollars for that colt don't you wait 'tell after blueberryin'."

"Mebbe you think," said Brother Skates, now firmly established on both boots, "'t I'm as green as a yaller cucumber!"

"Look out thar, Shamgar!" rang through the windows. "Give me sea-room here!—give me sea-room!"—we saw and heard the preparatory swinging of Captain Pharo's mallet—"cl'ar the way thar, Shamgar; for by the everlastin' clam, I'm a-goin' to give ye a clip that'll send ye t' the west shore o' Machias!"

A mighty concussion followed.

Elder Skates, as if reminded by these thunders of his duty, blushed deeply with shame and penitence.

"Vesty," he pleaded tremulously, "will you start 'Carried by the Angels'?"

Vesty went to the little organ.

Now we forgot all the rest, all that was rude and incongruous, forgot how mean the school-house was, how few protective boards left upon it. Captain Pharo and Captain Shamgar dropped their mallets at the first sound of Vesty's voice, and came in on tiptoe, with changed faces, reverent.

For there was the Basin sorrow in Vesty's voice, enough to subdue greater discords, and the Basin hope in it, implicit, wonderful, thrilled to tearful vision by a word:

"Carried by the angels,"

she sang.

"Carried by the angels.
Carried by the angels to the skies.
Carried by the angels,
Carried by the angels,
"Gathered with the lost in Paradise."

Coat-sleeves began to do duty across moist eyes; seeing—we all being simple Basins—winged white forms in the still air outside the battered school-house, bearing worn, earth-weary forms away—

"Gathered with the lost in Paradise."

It was not so hard to speak now.

"I've got my finger on a tex' here," said a white-haired, weather-beaten Basin, rising; "'In His love

and in His pity He redeemed us.' Now thar was a time when I didn't want nobody to say a word to me about pity—no sir! Love I wanted and admirin' I wanted, but no pity; that thar set me broilin'. But—now—I'd e'en a'most ruther have pity than love; 'nd I thank God most o' all that, in my pride and in my stren'th, and not wantin' no help an' gittin' mad at the thought of it—all'as He pitied me, an' He pitied me cl'ar through to the end.

"For I tell ye, thar can be love and admirin', that flashes up in the pan mighty strong at first, an' goes out, an' nary mite o' pity in it. But thar' ain't no pity 'ithout love; and it's a love 't ain't no fine-spun thread, but a ten-inch hawser; a love 't stands by ye when thar' 's a trackless path afore and a lost trail ahind; when ye're scuddin' afore the squall, an' the seas come thunderin' down on ye; when yer boat 's in splinters, and ye're a-bitin' the sand. Yis, an' when yer cruisin' 's all done at las', an' ye're jest a poor old hulk around in the way, driftin' in an' out 'ith the tides, 't calls out to ye, as ef ye was somebody, 'Ship ahoy! What port?'

"An' ye says, kind o' hopin', but not darin' nothin', 'The port as they calls Heaven.'

"An' 't shouts back to ye, strong across the wave, 'What are ye doubtin', man? That 's a port sure! and home 's thar, and folks 's thar, and the little children ye lost is thar. D'ye want a pilot?'

"'Ay, ay, sir!—ay, ay, sir!'"

The deep voice sank in tears, then broke out again:

"Git under the lee o' the wrack!

"For days an' nights once, in a storm 't I shall never forgit, we pulled under the lee o' a wracked vessel, 'n' no other way could we 'a' been saved.

"An' it was so, 't, in this sea o' life, all open ter the winds o' sorrer an' temptation, Christ come down, an' He giv' up joy an' a safe harbor, 'n' all that, jest ter be made a wrack on, so 't we might git under His lee, an' foller safe.

"It 's the great Breakwater o' the seas; don't ye fear but it 's a safe one!

"Young man, I know 't ye think o' somethin' more'n this, an' vary diffur'nt from this, a-startin' out each one in his clipper-bark, gay an' hunky in every strand, 'ith a steady follerin' breeze, an' everythin' set from skysail pole to the water's edge.

"All right! ye are the lad for me; ye can pull side an' feather stroke; ye can cl'ar a tops'l reef-tackle when the sail is full, ye are the lad for me. Steer bold; only steer true, by night an' day. I wish 't ye might no' meet wi' fogs an' icebergs an' collisions an' gales——

"An ' yit, I wish it not. The sea an' the storm is jest to teach us t' git under the lee o' the great wrack o' Love an' Pity, 't made hisself lost for us; ay, an' so to make a wrack o' our own happiness for the poor an' weak, 't's out a-tossin' shelterless, to lead 'em to the true Breakwater. That 's life, that 's the sea, that 's the lesson. Till we pass on, up the roads, into the harbor——"

The old mariner's voice failed him; he sat down.

"Vesty," said Elder Skates, and cleared his throat huskily; "Vesty, will you start 'The Tempests broke on Thee'?"

Vesty's voice:

> "'O Christ, it broke on Thee!
> Thy open bosom was my ward,
> It braved the storm for me.
> Thy form was scarred, Thy visage marred,—
> O Christ, it broke on Thee!'"

Great preachers have I heard dry-eyed, and skilled plaintive music enough; but now I looked out through the broken Basin windows, on the clear Basin sky, through a mist.

"Vesty," said Elder Skates, "let 's keep right along into 'Beautiful Valley o' Eden'!"

> "'How often amid the wild billows,
> I dream of thy rest, sweet rest,
> Sweet rest.'"

sang Vesty, with eyes darkly circled and sunken, and the beautiful, strong hand, labor-worn, and the thin old shawl fallen back from her shoulders.

There was a different tone now in the parting salutations of the Basins.

"I'm a-comin' up to help ye paper," said one woman to another; "ye got sick last year, and I'm a-comin', whether ye want me to or not."

"Oh, I want ye bad enough, Mar'ette."

But I knew what a struggle had been gone through with when I heard Miss Pray say:

"Car' Ann, if ye want to borry my ice-cream freezer I ain't a-usin' it for to-morrer."

Miss Pray alone of the Basins had acquired the monumental honor of possessing an ice-cream freezer, esteemed by others with a no less sacred jealousy than by herself; but she had hitherto refused all intimations tending toward social interchange and fellowship in the matter.

"Vesty's kind o' poorin' away," said one matron, looking wistfully after the girl.

"No wonder, with that great boy, and all she does. Aunt Low-ize tried to hold him, jest while Vesty was singin', an' she had to take him out and walk twict around Blueberry Hill t' keep him still; he's one o' this 'ere all-alive, jumpin' kind. I sh'd think he'd kill her."

I overtook Vesty in the lane; she was gathering flowers in Sunday pastime for the baby.

She turned to look at me with quiet gladness, kindness.

"I love to hear Captain Seabale. He doesn't come very often," said she, "but he makes me cry."

"I believe he made me cry," I answered. I watched her shaking a handful of flowers over the laughing boy. "How far do you think pity could ever go, Vesty?"

"Why?"—there was that high, grave study of me in her eyes, that haunting thought that I was sly! But for all her pains, too simple was she! No discovery; only the beautiful Basin unconsciousness. "Christ never said where to stop, did He?"

XX

SOCIAL DIVERSIONS AT THE "POST-OFFICE"

Leafless and brown are the trees, but the Basin has diviner glories than at midsummer, in colors unspeakable of sea and sky, of wild-sailing cloud, of sunset and of moon.

There come great news of Notely. In pursuance of which, "Did ye ever notice," said Captain Leezur, sitting on the log in the late sunshine, ambrosially sucking a nervine lozenge; "did ye ever notice, major, how 't all the great folks, or them 't 's risin' tew be great—how 't they all comes from a squantum place like this?"

"Yes," I said, "I've heard it as a remarkable fact."

"I don't mean t' say 't *everybody* in a squantum place is beound and destined tew be great or die!" said Captain Leezur, with whole-souled disparagement of such a thought: "no, no; they can't carry it on us so fur as that. 'Forced-to-go,' ye know."

"No, indeed!" I consented.

I accepted a nervine lozenge, and we braced ourselves firmly on the log, placid, but set, against all resistance, not to be great!

"What is this rewmer abeout Notely, major? I heered how 't you took a lot o' noos-sheets."

"It is fine. He is making for himself a name in your politics, and at the same time there 's the old fire in him, flashing out over conventions; one can almost hear him laugh. He rings out, clear, amid any false notes; it is a grand satire; sometimes the dry bones quake."

"Lord sakes!" said Captain Leezur, turning on me with deep-smitten dismay; "I heered how't he was bein' successful!"

"His financial speculations seem touched with magic, they say; he is courted, feared, praised, maligned; he laughs and rings out, the true note! His health is not strong, never since that fall. There; you have all I know, Captain Leezur."

Captain Leezur meditated. "There *be* times—I sh'd never want this said except between you an' me, major—when I'm glad 't Notely Garrison didn't marry Vesty, after all! Notely 'n' me was great mates, all'as. But I'll tell ye this, when Notely got everythin' he wanted he'd carry sail enough to sink the boat, all'as; couldn't never jump rough enough or fast enough on a high sea; kept the rest on us bailin' water: that was Note, when he had all the wind he wanted; that was Note, all'as—but I all'as loved him better 'n them 't was more keerful sailors."

The sun saw itself globed in a tear that fell on Captain Leezur's felts.

"Moderation in all things, ye know," he added, beaming, not to distress me; "even in passnips."

I mused with him in silent sympathy. "Oiling

the saw again, I see," I said at last glancing with reverent admiration of such benign industry at the oil-can.

"No," said Captain Leezur kindly; "I wa'n't. I was a-goin' deown, by 'n' by, to the cove, to ca'm the water deown, 'n' see ef I c'd spear up a few fleounders; but I ain't in no hurry. I'd jest as soon set areound on the int'rust o' my money!"

This was a joke insatiable between us, always bubbling over, always enough of it left for next time. At its utterance Captain Leezur's countenance was accustomed to break up entirely, while I laughed with an appreciation that never fainted or palled.

We felt that there was never aught sparkling enough to be said after it, but parted in succulent silence, Captain Leezur with his oil-can, going down to compose the waters, while I pursued my less omnipotent way to the Basin "post-office."

"Ef there 's anything trying," said Lunette, though with the peculiarly official air she always wore on post days, "it is dressin' sand-peeps. But thar! Tyson come home with a harf-bushel, an' what are ye goin' to do? Onct a year, Ty says, he wants ter jest stuff himself to the collar-bone on sand-peep pie, an' then he don't want to see nary one, nor hear 'em mentioned in his sight—not for another year."

It might have troubled the casual observer at first to discover, in the variety of Lunette's official capacity, which was post-office and which was sand-

peeps, so agreeably and informally did these two elements combine in her surroundings.

"Mis' Pharo Kobbe!" she called.

That lady, thus summarily summoned, sprang forward from a cloud of witnesses, as choice and flattered assistant.

"Won't you take them letters 't Major Henry's jest brought in, and deface the stamps on 'em? Turn the ink onter them pictur's o' George Washin'ton so 't his own mother's son wouldn't know him. I don't calk'late to have no stamps 't 's sent out from the Basin post-office washed out an' used over ag'in. The defacement they gets here is for everlastin' an' for aye."

I watched helplessly a full discharge of this command on the part of Mrs. Pharo Kobbe, and proceeded to pluck one of the sand-peeps meanwhile, along with the rest, waiting the arrival of the post bag.

"Some o' the rusticators 't was here in the summer," continued Lunette, sneezing over a culinary preparation of pepper, "though 't we ought to have two mails a week! Ef I was so dyin' crazy for news 's that, I'd go an' live to Machias!"

"That does seem dissipated and unreasonable, certainly," I assented, interested in the endeavor to extract the minutest pin-feathers from the tail of the sand-peep.

"Ef they was all like Major Henry, I told 'em, the post-office 'ud be easy runnin', an' I don't care if I do say it afore his face. I'd say it afore the

meet'n-house—ef there was one. The very first time 't Major Henry ever stepped inter this post-office he come up to me an' handed me a five-dollar bill, 'n' says he:

"'Mardam, could you kin'ly put my mail t' one side, me not all'as bein' convienent to be here at its openin', maybe; an' all the mail that ain't called for at its openin' bein' thrun up onter the top pantry shelf,' says he, ''nd everybody 't comes in lookin' it over t' see ef they've got anything, is a most beautiful compliment to human natur',' says he, 'an' one that I wish I could interduce everywhere; but me not bein' vary tall,' he says, 'an' kind o' near-sighted, I'm afeered as I might git somethin' 't didn't belong to me. Have ye got anythin' like a dror, or anythin' 't ye could lock up?' says he.

"'No,' says I, 'I hain't, but I'll tell ye what I can do. I can put 'em inter th' old Gran'mother Tyson soup-turreen, 't I don't believe the led of it 's been lifted this ten year; they'll be as safe as ef they was buried an' in their graves,' says I. An' so I thought, but ye know how things is all'as sartin to happen.

"What, in the name o' ructions, did Ty do but come home that afternoon with a bag o' ches'nits, which he knows I won't have in the pantry on account o' breedin' worms; but me bein' over to Mis' Kobbe's, what does he do, manlike, but dump them letters inter the churn, an' go an' sneak his ches'nits inter th' old Granm'er Tyson soup-turreen.

"Wal, I all'as churn my butter Friday mornin',

come hail, come wind: so I gits up—an' 'twas kind o' dark yit—an' in I pours the pail o' cream an' begins to churn, an' thinks I, 'This spatters onaccountable this mornin',' an' took off the cover to see what the ructions was!

"Wal, the verdick of it was, after I'd laid into 'Ty, I went down to major with the five-dollar bill an' another atop of it, all I had in this livin' world—'An' ef that 's any objec', major,' says I, a-wipin' of my eyes, 'it 's all I c'n do.'

"Wall, what think you, but major laughs, an' wouldn't tetch ary cent of it, but took 'is letters, an' says he, 'They've ackired a peculiar richness,' says he, 'an' I'd orter be up there mail-openin' an' not make a lady so much trouble,' says he. That 's the kind o' poppolation 's I, for one, sh'd like to fill up the Basin with!" said Lunette, flourishing her rolling-pin.

A murmur of approval ran through the room.

Blushing, embarrassed, but swollen with pride, I picked up another sand-peep to pluck.

At that instant "Snipe," the household and post-office dog, ran across the floor with high-careering head, holding a huge envelope in his teeth.

"Stop him! stop him!" cries arose: "it 's Elvine's registered letter, 't 's goin' to Boston for a tea-set!"

A rush followed Snipe into the bedroom, the door of which stood open; the evil dog ran under the bed and into the farthest corner, where, with his jaws formed into the semblance of a menace and a mock-

ing laugh, he assumed an attack upon that potential tea-set.

Lunette rushed in after him. Now the bed, in default, for some unknown though doubtless wise Basin reasons, of other stanchions, was set up on four chairs, one at each corner, and as Lunette rushed under it, she displaced the outermost chair; whereat the bed at that source collapsed with a crash, imprisoning both her and the dog.

"I've been a-threatenin' to have that bed fixed," said Tyson, with politic zeal, as his wife and dog were delivered.

Lunette with voiceless indignation seized one of a buttress of birch-switches behind the door, and began applying it to the consciously ruined Snipe, at the arising of whose howls the post-carrier drove up, and, entering, threw the bag, in loud token of his arrival, upon the floor.

Snipe, of all places, ran and entrenched himself behind my feeble legs! Whereat, "Don't whip him any more," I pleaded, being already flattered, in one way and another, as high as mortal could sustain.

Lunette turned unwillingly to the post. The post-driver stood about seven feet in his boots, with a handsome face, all mud-bespattered. Many voices beset him familiarly.

"Say, Will, did ye bring down my molasses?" "Say, Will, did ye match that ribbin f'r me?" "Say, Will," etc., etc.

"You bet I did, every time!" he answered jovially, showing his white teeth. Interest in the post

was comparatively moribund; a general parcel-distributing and hand-shaking followed—until we were startled by a cry from Lunette:

"Look a' this, Will Hunson!" said she; "look a' this, will ye? A whole pot o' strawberry jam soaked right plumb inter the middle o' the United States Governmunt!"

It was only too true. The pile of letters and papers which she had emptied onto the moulding table were red and glowing as the summer rose.

Will hung his dismayed head.

"Be them ructions, or ain't they?" coldly demanded Lunette, pointing to the awful pile.

"I didn't mean to," said Will.

"Didn't mean to!" cried Lunette. "Didn't mean to, lived in a lean-to!"

Blasted by terror and sarcasm, we all hung our heads. Snipe grovelled in still farther behind my legs.

"There 's got to be something done!" cried Lunette. "Folks 's got to learn 't the United States Governmunt is a awful an' a solemn an' a turrible thing. What ef it sh'd be told 't we hadn't no more respec' for her down here to the Basin 'n to soak her through with strawberry jam an' molarsses! These here ructions have been a-goin' on too long with the Basin post-office. I'm a-goin' to fill out a blank an' send it to Washin'ton!"

Snipe howled. Lively apprehension, none the less poignant for being vague, sat on every pale brow.

"Here," continued Lunette, "'s major's business

letters, looks as though they'd been a-settin' in the dentist's chair, havin' all the old stumps extracted for a whole set of uppers and unders!"

Lunette's comparison, though tragic, was not inapt.

"Here"—blind terror yielded to curiosity on many features—"here is Jennie Cossey's letter from her beau, down to New London, with a cardboard dagarrier in it. Yes," said Lunette, manipulating the envelope curiously and holding it to the light; "I knew 't the next thing he'd be sendin' his pictur'. How 'd you feel, Will Hunson, ef you was stan'in' in his shoes an' had gone an' combed yer hair 'tell yer arm ached, an' stuck the end o' yer hankercher outer yer pocket, an' had yer pictur' took, an' then sot down an' wrote a lot o' sweetness to wrop around it—an' when she took it out have it look like Injuns a-yellin' on the warpath!"

"Say, Lunette," said honest Will, his handsome face redder than any of the lively imageries she had called up to terrorize his conscience; "I got that front hair fascinater ye wanted, an' I sold the spruce gum for two dollars for ye. Look a' here!"

"Will Hunson, don't ye ride no more strawberry jam an' molarsses down here in the middle o' the United States Governmunt ag'in, will ye?" said Lunette, determined to fall gently.

But it appeared then that no blank was to be filled out and sent to Washington!

With a sharp yelp of joy Snipe sprang from be-

hind the impregnable covert of my legs, and rushed out into the free and gladsome elements.

I gathered up my portion of matter from the illuminated heap of "government," beside the sand-peep pie on the table, and with a fond smile at Lunette I also departed.

XXI

BROKEN WINDOWS

Always now on the evening of post day, after I had read my newspapers, came the worn shawl and the dark, weary eyes—Vesty, to sit awhile with Miss Pray.

"Is there any news of Notely, Major Henry?"

Now and then I made her put the question, but oftener I was kind and volunteered any information on this subject that I had been able to glean; and at the news of joy or success for him, how her eyes glowed! Basin pure and great, with no thought for the shadow of her own lot—Vesty of the Basins.

"Is there any news of Notely, Major Henry?"

She was pinning the shawl at her throat after a short call, before going out; and she gave me her direct, reproachful look, as though I had been teasing her.

But I was not teasing her; my heart yearned over her where she stood, facing the dark.

"I will tell you what I have read," I said, "as I walk home with you. You are 'helping' them at your own father's again now?"

She bowed her head. Her dark eyes filled me with a kind of frenzy to make rest and comfort about her; and I had hard news for her!

"In my papers of the past week the beginning of what concerned Notely Garrison was a medley. 'Reformer,' 'The old never-heeded cry of a St. John in the wilderness,' and again, from the other side, 'Fanatic,' 'Visionary,' 'Throwing out his by no means boundless wealth like water for the sake of chimeras, ideally noble enough, but still vain chimeras!' And the news at the week's end, 'Young Garrison stricken: a shock. Overwork, over-excitement, and the result of an accident suffered not long since. Recovery very doubtful.'"

"I want to go to him," said Vesty. I heard her breath coming painfully and quick.

"I knew that. I have already made arrangements for you to leave early in the morning."

"Just to see him. I promised him. Notely! Notely! I can't bear it—just as though it was little Gurd."

"You shall see him by to-morrow night. I have sent a messenger to make special arrangements for conveyance, in case you should desire this."

"Major Henry, I forgot. I cannot; I have no money."

"Ah, but you can and must. It is arranged."

"And I do not know the way. I was never from the Basin."

"I am going with you. In my country high ladies travel with a servant, thus. Get what rest you can and be ready at four. They will take good care of little Gurd while you are gone."

"Some time," said Vesty, on the morrow, "when

Gurd is a little older, and I can take him away somewhere where I can earn wages, I can pay you, Major Henry. They want me now—his mother wants me, somehow, I know."

"You are safe to think that."

"My clothes are not like theirs," said Vesty quietly, when we came at night more and more into the throngs of civilized life. "Do you mind? I knew that I should not be dressed like them."

"In my country high ladies wear what they will."

She gave a low, perplexed laugh, looking at me with curious sorrow for my hallucinations.

"But I am only Vesty."

"Surely. But you remind me so of a great lady."

At least Vesty travelled as a princess might. I brought her the long and devious journey swiftly, with as little fatigue as possible: but it was late at night when we mounted the steps of the Garrison town residence; the house was all alight.

Mrs. Garrison brushed past the servant at the door.

"Vesty Rafe! I knew it was you. I knew you would come, somehow, child." She drew her in, and fell on her neck, weeping.

"He is dying?" murmured Vesty then, with cold lips.

"He has not spoken since the shock. He does not know us; but it may be he will know you! Come!"

Servants from the doorways of the wide, rich hall were staring strangely at Vesty and at me. Vesty turned to me now, to consider me.

I gave her the warning look. "I came to show Vesty the way," I said in simple Basin speech. "I will go to my hotel. I will call."

The girl's sad eyes looked reproach at me, but she obeyed me.

"Wait," she said then; "I want to speak with Major Henry." She came to me in the door.

"When will you come back?" she murmured, low.

"I will call in the morning."

"You will come?" A strange abandoned distress was in her eyes, as of a child lost in crowded city ways.

"Vesty!"

She turned, chidden, but with a sort of wilful content.

My heart bounded as I limped down the steps. I smiled to myself, safe in the dark, sardonically. Make what you will of it, with other men she was strong, womanly, serene; with me, she had the sweet grace to show weakness.

The carriage bounded over the paving-stones and stopped at my hotel. The driver lifted his hat obsequiously. I, with sardonic smile, entered the hotel, where I was not unknown. No doubt was made as to the character of my apartments.

I rested sumptuously, but could not sleep.

"How was he now, who lay stricken yonder?

Had he known her, or would those rare blue eyes be lifted to her too, unrecognizing, and so break her heart?"

Eyes once seen, to haunt one, the handsomest in form and color and expression that I had ever seen in human head.

Now I saw them again, as I had first seen them at the meeting in the Basin school-house; the firm, brown hand grasping the sailor's bonnet; eyes omnipotent with health and joy, casting their mischievous, beautiful glances over toward Vesty—she, patient, struggling, with her holy look!

And the Basin wind blew in through the cracked windows, and a bird flew upward:

> "Softly through the storm of life,
> Clear above the whirlwind's cry"—

It all resolved itself into that at last; the human voice crying upward, shivering, like the bird's flight; but with sure aim now!

I saw how it was at the first look at Vesty's face, when I called the next morning.

Notely, waking once, had not known her among the group of doctors and attendants; only stared at her as one of them, kindly, vaguely.

But, for the most part, he slept in weary bliss. Once, later, they thought her face had awakened some old memory.

"The school-house—is growing—dark," he murmured, in indistinct, half-recovered speech, then fell off again into his soundless slumbers.

The doctors knew. I knew. The mother read no hope.

"He has so much to leave," she sobbed, turning ever to Vesty, who, numb with sorrow, yet tried to comfort her.

So much to leave!—but who knows ever to how much going! Not so Mrs. Garrison. The bright way ended at this pass, in blank darkness.

And Notely slept on, wearied, heedless; soft, luxurious trappings of life all about him; his reconciled young wife; his hope now of an heir for his name and fortune; the work he had struggled at last so unrestingly to do; and the dear, lost love of his youth, Vesty, bending over him.

Leaving them, not able to be heedful, so deep-wrapped in unknown dreams. Waking once more and turning from them vaguely (ah, the sublime, unconscious contempt of death!); turning from them vaguely, as though in some far Basin the dawn were breaking!

"Uncle Benny," said he, holding out his wasted hand, "the school-house is very dark—I'll go home now."

. . . . . .

So Vesty's heart was broken in her, and to me she came, as to a father, or more as to a friendly, favoring ghost.

"Take me back to the Basin!"

"Yes."

She sat in a kind of patient apathy, numb, her heart faithful with the dead.

"How little Gurd will call for you when he sees you again!" I spoke; but to waken her was to bring such a torrent of tears, choking, she entreated me not.

But, "It is well, I believe," I said to her; "there is life enough! Be sure he does not lack for life. What! do you think we have found the best of it, and all of it, here? I imagine God has enough! It is not because His bread fails Him that any go hungry, or because He lacks for gold that any are poor, but only for His purpose—we must guess—and when the poor, shattered school-house grows dark the light breaks elsewhere."

Vesty had not slept for two nights; the sweet face was haggard.

Again passing among crowds of restless, hurrying life, faces cold and strange, or often staring curiously, the haunted look of one lost came again into her eyes.

"I must go and take care of Gurd," she said, "as well as I can, while I live. O God! I hope he never may get lost, out in the world."

"No; how could he, in God's world?"

"When we get back to the Basin then you will be tired of staying there in the bleak and cold. You will never wait for me to pay you; you will laugh at me, and you will go back to the world."

"Vesty!"

Wearily she turned her heavy eyes on me—a ghost; there was the forced, unconscious cry in them of the child, or even of the woman.

Sacredly I shielded their glance, and ghostly; it was as though I had not seen.

"You mistake my courage. There is no winter," I said, smiling, "strong enough to drive me from the Basin."

XXII

"NEIGHBORIN'"

VESTY never said "Stay!" but that unconscious look in her eyes made a sort of forlorn fireplace of hope to me, desolate, open to all the winds. As God wills. I wait.

I went often to Captain Leezur; the nervine lozenges were potent.

"We all'as dew neighbor a great deal in winter," said he approvingly, stretching those dear felts before the blaze.

"Is that a piece of the log we used to sit on?" I inquired mournfully.

"Wal, neow! I r'a'ly believe ye feel a kind o' heart-leanin' to'ds her, don't ye?"

"How can I help it?"

"Sartin! sartin!" said he, delighted; "we're jest like twin-brothers. But neow don't you werry one mite. She 's done a good werk an' she 's returnin' to Natur's God. I've got another one 't I'm goin' to roll deown, first hint o' spring. I don't calk'late ever to be feound, like them wise an' foolish virgins, without no log to set on."

"Thar 's somethin' abeout a log," continued Cap-

tain Leezur; "when ye go inter the heouse in warm weather, an' sets deown in a cheer, the women kind o' looks at ye as though you was sick or dreffle lazy: but when ye're eout settin' on a log ye feels as though God was on yewr side, an' man nor woman wa'n't able to afflict ye. They 's a depth an' a ca'm to the feelin' of it, 't them 't sets on fringe an' damarsk sofys don't know nothin' abeout."

"You must have required a great deal of oil in sawing up the old log, captain," I said.

The captain gave the restful sigh of battles overpast.

"Mebbe you think 't the drippin's o' one skunk did it," said he; "but they didn't. Did ye ever think," he resumed, "o' what a wonderful thing ile is, an' what 'd we dew without 'er?—heow the wringin' machine 'ud seound when ye was turnin' on 'er for yer wife, Monday mornin's?"

"No," said I sadly.

"Then ag'in, it 's ile in yer natur' keeps ye ca'm an' c'llected, an' it 's ile in yer dispersition l'arns ye t' say, 'Moderation 's the rewl, even in passnips.'"

Lubricated with a sense of peace and blessing, I arose.

"Ye're jest like me," gurgled Captain Leezur; "ye don't feel easy in a cheer! Ye wanter be eout on the old log, don't ye?"

"Yes," said I. "This isn't quite like."

"We're nateral twin-brothers!" he exclaimed, following me to the door. There he looked cautiously backward.

"Dew you remember what I said to ye once," said he, "on the subject o' kile?"

"Ahem!—female affection?" I inquired gently.

"Yes."

"Some calls it that," said my twin-brother, beaming on me, "and some calls it kile. Wal, neow, ef a sartin person shows a dispersition to kile, let 'em! Let 'em," said Captain Leezur, irradiating my thin being with the glory of his countenance; "let 'em."

"Ah," said I, and shook my head again sadly, "I think more and more we will have to go our pilgrimage without that, my friend."

"Neow you look a' here," said Captain Leezur. "I ain't a-sayin' nothin', that they will or that they won't, but if they dew, let 'em. Did ye ever think o' what a heap o' wisdom there is in a poor old bean-pole?

"Mornin' glory comes up an' looks at it. Bean-pole stands up stiff, without no feelin's: don't look at 'er, nor bend over an' kiss 'er, nor nothin'. Mornin' glory don't git skeered, an' she peouts out a lot o' leaves an' tenderls an' begins to kile. Bean-pole takes a chaw o' terbakker an' looks off t'other eend o' the field t' see what the pertater crop 's goin' to be. Mornin' glory peouts out more leaves an' blossoms, an' keeps a-kilin'. By 'n' by thar ain't no poor old God-forsaken bean-pole standin' there—it 's all one mess o' kile an mornin' glory!

"I tell ye, major, we need once in a while for t' l'arn a lesson from natur'. I ain't a-goin' to press

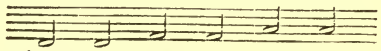
ye to stay longer, for I know ye wanter go neighborin'!"

Dazzled, I turned away from the refulgent keenness of his wink.

But I did not take the direction that wink had indicated. I had an invitation, not from Vesty, but from the two most ancient of the Basins to tea, and I stopped in, a solitary and thoughtful bean-pole, at Captain Pharo's on the way.

The music-box was playing. I was glad to hear that; a tune in undertone, like waves slowly, softly breaking.

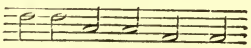
"She used ter play fifteen different tunes when we first had her," said Captain Pharo pensively; "but she got to squeakin', an' so we had Leezur up to ile 'er, an' ever sence she 's played one tune fifteen times! Poo! poo! hohum! Wal, wal—



'My days are as the grass—'

Shouldn't care so much, though, ef 'twas only 'The Wracker's Darter.'

"I've threatened a good many times to overhaul her myself, but I ain't no knowledge o' instermental music, and I s'pose I might spend a week on 'er, and not combine 'er insides up to playin' no 'Wracker's Darter,' arter all. Hohum!



'Or as the morning flow'r,

At each successive pause the organs of the music-box wheezed, struggled, almost faintly let go of life,

then began again the undertone, of waves softly breaking.

"I like it," I said. "I like it wonderfully."

Captain Pharo gave me a keen look and went to the door and winked. I was no longer supine under such invitations. I rose and followed him. "Look a' here, major," said he, when we were alone. He coughed. "My foot 's 'most well."

"I am glad of it, captain."

"Look a' here, major," said he, desperately, "what makes you so took up with that 'ere monot*u*nous tune in thar? I'm afeered I may 'a' misled ye, times past, with regards to female grass." He coughed again and lit his pipe. I waited.

"'Specially," he groaned, "some things I may h've said with regards to red and white clover."

Still I waited.

"Look a' here, major, when anybody sets down 'n' admires to sech a monot*u*nous tune as that in thar, thar's somethin' the matter with 'em."

Still I would not speak. Tears almost were in his eyes.

"Now I may h've said some things on partickaler pesterin' 'casions in times past, but in general my verdick—hohum!—is fav'rable to female grass; 'specially—hohum! hohum!—wal, wal, ye knows my meanin', major—'specially with regards to red and white clover: hohum! how 's Vesty?"

The captain gave a sigh that would have exculpated him from the gravest of crimes, and looked steadfastly toward the west.

"I haven't seen her to-day."

"Ye'll think it over, won't ye, major?" said he, still with that far withdrawn vision.

"Well, yes; I'll think it over."

I had proceeded but a little way when he called me back.

"I had it on my mind to tell ye," said he, "when I heered 't ye'd been 'nvited down t' Aunt Gozeman's and Aunt Electry's t' tea; ef they give ye some o' their green melon an' ginger persarves, do ye manage to bestow 'em somewhar's without eatin' of 'em, somehow. They're amazin' proud an' ch'ice of 'em, an' ye don't want to hurt their feelin's, but ye'd better shove 'em right outer the sasser inter yer britches pocket 'n eat 'em—leastways that 's the way they 'fected me."

Visions of a past mortal suffering flitted across Captain Pharo's face.

"I'll try," I said.

"Ef thar 's melon an' ginger persarves settin' by yer plate, d'ye ask them two old women, in some kind of genteel s'ciety ructions sort o' a way, ter go outer the room an' git ye somethin', an' soon 's they've gone d'ye jump up an' thring a shawl over that darn' parrot o' theirn 't stands there noticin' an' swearin', an' chuck 'em in over behind the woodbox or somewhar's, but don't eat 'em."

"All right," I said, as he shook my hand with suggestive earnestness once more in parting.

The sisters, by mutual adoption, not by birth, lived together in the "Laury Gleeson;" the sign

of a wrecked schooner nailed up over their shanty door.

"And why not? We be all a-sailin', been't we?" said Aunt Electry, who was ninety years old, lighting her pipe; "only I wish 't some 't 's sailin' solitary had mates 't 's fit for 'em—how is Vesty?"

"I don't know," I began, afflicted with a sort of lightness of head. I wanted to take out Uncle Benny's pocket-mirror that I carried with me now. Was I beautiful, and tall, and fair? What had happened me!

"Lectry 's a great girl for straight-for'ard langwidge," said Miss Gozeman kindly, pitying my confusion; she was only eighty and did not smoke.

They led me out more nimbly, almost, than I could follow, to show me the "stock"—some forlorn, fantastic stumps of trees, long dead, all whitewashed with tender art! the pet coon, the tame crow, the wicked goat.

There was another treasure; who, as we came in and sat down to tea, eyed me from his cage with grudging and disfavor: it was the parrot; and I presume injunctions were upon him to keep still, but I did not know.

"Does he talk?" I inquired kindly.

He snapped viciously at the cage.

"A friend 't had him on shipboard gave him to us long ago," explained Miss Gozeman, with gentle evasion; "we ain't ever been able to break him of it." What the habit was of which they had not been able to break him I sadly inferred.

There was a munificent dish of the green melon and ginger preserves by my plate. I was chatting with my friends, and at the same time meditating what to do, when the tame crow, who had slyly entered the house behind us and stolen Miss Gozeman's spectacles, was now discovered through the window hastening to hide them in the chip-pile.

My entertainers trotted nimbly out after him. I rose, and, lifting the cover of the stove, dashed in the contents of my saucer—when I was startled by a shrill voice and a mocking laugh.

"Oh, I see ye! I'll tell!"

I had forgotten to cover the parrot.

"You are no gentleman if you do!" I retorted, forgetting with whom or what I was talking.

"Shut up!" said the parrot, and laughed. "I see ye, d—n ye! I'll tell!"

At all events I turned, with the intention of going out to assist the ladies in their search for the spectacles, when the scene through the window held me for a moment spellbound.

The crow, having accomplished his mischievous device, was perched near by, gravely regarding the search of the two estimable and time-honored women, who were peering with their faces near the earth, and their backs turned unconsciously; when the cherished goat, creeping maliciously up, made a rush at them from the rear, and pitched them both into the chip heap.

This unspeakably base proceeding had the result,

however, of discovering to them the glasses, with which they soon after entered, smiling.

"Bill often hides our glasses," said Aunt Electry.

"Does the goat often bunt you over?" I inquired, with dismay.

"Shut up!" said the parrot, at the sound of my voice. "Oh, I see ye! I'll tell!"

My kind friends gave him a sharp glance, but considerately did not look at me. They saw my emptied preserve plate, however, and concluding that I had taken advantage of their absence the more greedily to gorge myself on its contents, they generously piled it full again of what they imagined to be the same coveted substance.

Seeing this, the parrot shrieked with fiendish joy.

"Indeed it is excellent——" I began.

"Oh, stow your gab!" sneered the parrot, in a suddenly gruff bass voice.

Aunt Electry rose and stamped her foot at him.

"He only knows what he 's been taught long ago —by a friend," said Aunt Gozeman reassuringly; "he can't—tell anything new, right out!"

All the crime they imputed to me then was gluttony in the matter of preserves! Very well; I preferred that.

"They were really so delightful," I began, with the natural reaction from my qualms.

"Oh, wur-r-r!" interrupted that horrible grating voice, and then laughed high and loud.

The sisters in affliction rose and bore the cage out

into the shed. But I heard oaths and cackles of malicious intention fired at me through the door.

"Sing 'We be a-sailin',' sister," said Aunt Electry, when we had retired again to the fireside.

Miss Gozeman obediently began, in a soft, timid tremulo.

"We are *eout* on the ocean *sail*ing," came in mocking, strident accents from the wood-shed; "Oh, h—ll! give us a rest!" But dear Aunt Gozeman sang right on, smiling pitifully:

"'To our home beyond the tide.'"

Ah, what tides! what tides had been in these two lives! And stranded here for a little, how they cherished with a great heart of compassion the dead trees that bore them no fruit, loving and pitying the wicked parrot that mocked at them, the crow that stole from them, the goat that upset them.

My own notions of charity seemed so little and mean in comparison.

"Ask me again," I pleaded; "I have been so seldom invited to tea. I have enjoyed it."

Even the fate of the green melon and ginger preserves lay hard on my awakened conscience. But I made up for that. Not for this winter nor any winter, so long as they live, should Aunt Electry or Aunt Gozeman want either for preserves or less brilliant condiments.

Indeed, I play at making home and occupation, and they of the Basin are to me as my sheep through

this wild, strange winter; and I as their sly shepherd —sly, like Captain Leezur.

All except Vesty. To her child I can make gifts, unknown, through my stanch friend, Lunette, even of food and clothing, but not to her. The old frayed shawl is grander than any ermine, and the goddess' chest is erect and broad; the winter will not kill her —but I have gazed sadly in the mirror, and I go often to Captain Leezur.

XXIII

THE "FLAG-RAISIN'," OR 'THE OCCASION"

"If there 's any fun going on," frankly admits Mrs. Kobbe, "you'll all'as find me up an' dressed!" Perhaps I sympathize more truly with her kind-hearted spouse, who says with a deep sigh: "We mustn't be tackiturn jest because the wind's off the snow-banks."

So I go to the flag-raising.

"The Crooked Rivers and Capers have had their flag up these three weeks," said Lunette; "and I heard how the Artichokes had h'isted theirn yesterday. When the Artichokes have got their flag up, seems as though the Basins had better be thinkin' o' what time it is in the mornin'!"

"What is the flag to be raised for?" I inquired, with unsuspecting innocence.

There was an afflicted silence; still they loved me. Lunette alone answered at last, turning to Tyson, not to me.

"I should think it 's enough to have a flag-raisin' without a-askin' what it is for!" said she. "What does trees grow for? What does anything in natur' act the way it does for?"

I, ever safe anchored behind Lunette's championship, looked out securely at the derelict Tyson, to see if he could answer. He could not, but was abashed. Still I so far appropriated the hint, wisely and delicately delivered, that I made no further inquiries, only giving myself unhesitatingly to the joy of preparation.

The flag was to be raised over the school-house, and instead of wending our way dissonantly thither, as was our habit in attending the meetings, we were to go in procession!

A curious awe attached to this idea, in which I fully shared, as, being formed in line, I tried to limp martially behind the valiant Lunette.

"Halt, by clam!" said our general.

"What is it?" came in whispers along the line.

"Jakie Teel" (one of the sculpins) "'s got his trousers on hind side afore!"

"Flory dressed him by candlelight this mornin', so 't she could get time to make three loaves o' angel-cake for the flag-raisin'."

The victim of this mysterious adventure was led away by his mother for reaccoutrement, while we as a regiment waited patiently for his return to warlike rank and file.

"If these condummit ructions are over," said our general—for the wind was blowing cold—"forwards ag'in, by clam!" and we marched upon the school-house; but we encountered so many difficulties, of wayward ropes, in hoisting our ensign, that Captain Pharo declared, rubbing his chilled hands;

"'T we'd omit the usual cheerin' 'tell we'd been in and thawed out—ef they was any thaw to us—leastways baited."

Vesty was there with the rest, munching a slice of angel-cake—fit food for her! I smiled kindly upon her, but did not forget that I was an indifferent bean-pole.

"Major!" cried the Basin, toward the close of the repast, with its mouth sweet and full—"Major, a speech! a speech!"

Now I had a heart given to the Basin, with a simple thought or two, and I requisitioned the best of my forces for the "Occasion," conscious of my morning glory there—oh, she of the skies! munching angel's food.

Whatever I had said or done, moreover, the Basin would have applauded; yet such cheers as I heard now left no doubt upon my too-willing and plastic sense of a phenomenal and hitherto unsuspected ability.

"Vesty," said Elder Skates, starting to his feet, "will you start—start—start—anything?"

"We always *do* sing

> "'In the prison cells I set,
> Thinking, mother dear, of you,'

to flag-raisin'," said the ever well-informed and officious Lunette.

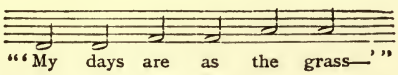
"Somehow," said Captain Pharo, shrugging his shoulders, "thar 's too much of a sea-rake blowin' acrost the back o' my neck t' sing 'Prison Cells;'

'tain't clost enough for it here. What d'ye say to 'Hold the Fort'?"

What they said was unanimous. Even Captain Leezur knew it, and the sculpins, of terrible voice. It was sung with such complete personal abandonment to strong oral gifts that, at the second verse, the remaining quota of plastering upon the school-house roof became loosened and fell with a crash upon the head of that very unfortunate sculpin who under other blighting circumstances had been forced to undergo temporary absence from our ranks in the morning.

He uttered a mature sea-oath, and was again marched violently from our presence by his mother; but I was happy to see that he returned soon afterward and renewed his portion of the song with a gusto which the added quality of defiance now rendered deafening, while through all our din sounded true the flute of Vesty's sweet voice.

"We mustn't forgit the occasion, I s'pose," said Captain Pharo, our general, at length. "Poo! poo! hohum! I s'pose it 's about time we was thinkin' o' goin' out to cheer the flag. Forwards, by clam! Poo! poo! hohum! Wal, wal—



"Sh!" said Mrs. Kobbe, deftly getting audience at his ear.

"Ladies an' gentlemen an' childern," said Captain Pharo, taking his place beside the flag; "we've h'isted of 'er, an' here she blows"—he put his hand

in his pocket for his pipe, and drew from his vest a match.

Mrs. Kobbe coughed loudly, and even shook her head at him: he put them back.

"We have h'isted on 'er," he continued, "an' here she blows!"

Mrs. Kobbe's cough of deeper warning and high-mounting blushes on his account nerved him.

"We've h'isted of 'er," he shouted with desperate defiance, "and thar she blows, don't she, by clam! on the full, the free, the glorious, an' the everlastin' h'ist!"

A sturdy round of applause was not wanting, but on this point Mrs. Kobbe was visibly sceptical: she received her lord with sniffs of disdain.

"'The full, the free, the glorious, an' the everlastin' h'ist'!" said she. "Where was you eddicated, Cap'n Pharo Kobbe?"

"It don't make but darn little difference whar ye've been eddicated," replied Captain Pharo, "when ye're tryin' to make a speech, an' one o' them devil-fish boys goes around behind ye an' snaps a live lobster onto the slack o' yer britches!"

Giggles from a school of sculpins safe hidden somewhere lent further aggravation to the dilemma.

"Jakie Teel an' Pharie Kobbe, Junior, 'll come to judgment," cried Mrs. Kobbe, in a loud voice, "'specially Pharie Kobbe as soon 's ever he gits home," whereat giggling from that miscreant quarter ceased, and she relieved her lord of his painful embarrassment.

But at this point a new and surprising development arose. The Basin horses attached to some wholesale herring-boxes, extemporized as sleighs, were driven to the scene. Captain Pharo, with heart-whole joy at the sight, lit his pipe and declared, with now beaming countenance:

"It has been arranged, to crown this happy 'casion, for all our unmarried Basins over sixteen year o' age, not forgettin' widders under forty, to have a sleigh ride. Elder Skates'll reel off the names, accordin' to which you can pile yerselves in accordin'ly, two 'n' two, side by side, thus 'n' so, male an' female, created He them!"

Flushed with inspiration, Captain Pharo glanced triumphantly at his wife, who, at this more than Pentateuchal illustration, refused to sneer.

So absorbed was I in watching the gleeful embarkation, and so little dreamed I of being considered in a case like this, it had not even occurred to me that I too was an unmarried Basin widely over sixteen years of age, and yet a little under forty, when—

To the choicest seat in the very largest herring-box, the back of which was stylishly bedizened by the splendors of the star bedquilt, I heard my own name called:

"Major Paul Henry and the Widder Rafe!"

Who and where was the Widow Rafe? Lo! Vesty stepped out. To be sure—the formal, the flag-raising, the "Occasion" name of Vesty!

I led her to her place, but, as for me, I sat down,

lost to mortal woes, silent and dazed, among the stars.

"Didn't you want to sit with me?" said Vesty, her face rather grave.

"Oh, why do you ask that?"

"You looked, when they called our names, as though you didn't want to."

Now I tried to dwell upon the words of Captain Leezur, but, however callous I succeeded in appearing on the outside, at heart I was a happy, happy bean-pole.

"I was stunned," I said. "Besides, you see, I did not expect to be invited."

"Why not, Major Henry?"

Oh, the beautiful Basin! the beautiful Basin! I tried to speak, but could not.

"You never seemed before," said she, a sea-shell color glowing in her cheeks, "to feel above us!"

She felt humbled, and my poor brain was too dizzy and incredulous to frame fitting words. I swallowed hard; that was a Basin prerogative, and by exerting it a direct Basin inspiration seemed to come to me.

"Feel above you! O Vesty!"

At that the sea-shell color went away down low, even to her lips, but no further illumination came to me.

Past ghostly hill and moor and still-gleaming flood we flew. "I am happy," I could say at last, "as I ought not to be. In all scenes and places where I may ever be I shall remember this, Vesty."

She shivered a little. Ah! the sad old shawl! I clinched my hands.

Past hill and moor and still-gleaming flood: the light of day changed to one unfathomed, possible, as of sweet, unspoken dreams becoming blessed at nightfall.

Then all at once, round and full above a distant hill-top, rose the hoyden moon, and the Basins saluted her with shouts of natural delight, all save Vesty and I, who were silent.

Now, I saw, was the hour when each Basin put his arm about his girl. I could not have touched my girl, not under all the rollicking moonbeams that ever fired the heart of youth and man. Farther she seemed to me than that far white hill-top, glittering and high.

Yet it pierced me that it was a gloomy ride for her. "It was good and kind of them," I said, "to place a poor old fellow like me here beside you; but you should have one of those rosy, handsome lads with you; you so young, though we forget it. Your life is yet to live."

At the reproach in her eyes—a look of anger, too, but for its wild and dark distress—my heart had almost leaped to my lips.

But—too merry the rollickers, who had fallen behind us, driving on the homeward road; there had been several laughing, reckless adventures of overturned herring-boxes in the snow-drifts; now the pole attached to one of these had broken; the frightened horses had cleared themselves and were veering

madly on the narrow road, with the swinging cross-bar, toward that side of the sled where my girl sat, unconscious of the danger, still and pale.

I sprang, fell in a heap, but rose again somehow; and now at last I put up my arm. It was not without strength—in this case more than mortal strong—still, in the end, I fell.

When I came to myself we were still flying through the wild, swift-changing scene, homeward bound; one of my hands was numb, and my wrist bandaged, and my head—was on Vesty's shoulder! We were in right Basin fashion now, only by needs it was Vesty's arm that was about me.

"Am I dead, Vesty?" said I, half believing it in my bliss; besides, I had ever a great appreciation of the Irish humor.

"Oh, don't, major; don't!" said Vesty; "you saved me from getting terribly hurt, they say—or——"

"Ugh!" I groaned.

"Your poor arm!" said she. "Oh, the pain!"

"Nothing pains me," said I.

"Your arm wasn't broken, major; but it 's terribly bruised and sprained."

"And my neck, Vesty—you are sure that was not broken?"

She sighed, but since I was bent, she followed my humor.

"Never fear," said this demure young woman; "that 's too proud ever to get a twist."

Here was a dilemma—that I should be developing into a wit and Vesty into a coquette!

"Well," said I, "I must try and straighten myself up again," and with that endeavor the pain did cut me so cruelly I fainted, quite without any maiden affectation, back again on to Vesty's arm.

"Try and think," said she, when I could hear her voice, "that I am some old woman, just trying to take care of you—somebody not disagreeable to you, and keep still till we get home."

"Very well," said I, tormenting myself with the thought that she was acting under some compelling sense of obligation; and that should never be.

So I answered briefly all at once; and no sooner had I spoken than I endured a gnawing consciousness that I was the hatefullest thing that had escaped extermination that night. I kept still, however; the pain was something to dread.

At least I had my beautiful mother's hair, thick and curling; that was all Vesty could see now there on her shoulder. I comforted myself with that thought as a child. I was weak, and I let some tears roll down my face that Vesty could not see.

When the strong fellows took me out of the sleigh and bore me very gently up to the door they stopped there for a moment, while I wondered; and if any bitter sense of their physical supremacy pierced me at that moment it ceased forever, as with a preconcerted signal from the foremost they lifted the caps from their heads and cheered my name, thrice and

again, and again, with ringing cheers—and Vesty standing by!

The old Basin flag—almost as dilapidated as I—had heard nothing like it; but when they dressed the swollen arm pain sent me off into oblivion again. Vesty's was the last face I saw bending over me:

"Do you"—timidly—"do you want me to come to-morrow, and see how you are?"

"Oh, if you will—thank you! Still, I am all right—I shall be all right, never fear."

She lingered still a moment, but spoke calmly:

"If you don't care anything about me why did you risk your life to save me from getting hurt?"

A demon possessed me. Pity I could have endured, but if she were stung on by that inflicted sense of gratitude?

"Why did you risk your life to save me?"

"Oh, it was *pity*, child," I answered her; the surging bitterness within made it almost a sneer—"natural human pity: it is strong in all my race."

She looked at me with a beautiful sorrow, and as though she called me proudly, to a better contempt of myself.

"I wish you had a mother," said she then, and flushed, the holy eyelids low, pinning the old shawl—"as it is, I don't know what to say."

XXIV

THE STORY OF THE SACRED COW

VESTY came next day at evening, but she took pains to be found in company with almost the entire Basin.

I was so much better that I was able to be about and receive my guests; at sight of Uncle Coffin even the maimed hand seemed to tingle healthily. He marched me to a chair with an ostentation of violence, that really treated me, however, with the softest gentleness, and sat me down.

"Dodrabbit ye!" he cried, standing off and regarding me. "What ye been a-doin' of, you young smashin', slashin', cavortin'-all-around young spark, you!"

"Well," said I, naturally feeling rakish after this, "I will tell you. Miss Pray had a brood of chickens come off unseasonably to-day, who desired particularly and above all things, having taken a general outlook on life, not to live. Under Miss Pray's directions I have been amusing myself with trying to defeat that purpose. I have watched for any signs of hope in their world-disgusted eyes, dipped their unwilling beaks in food, put chips upon their

backs to help them maintain an earthly equilibrium —so little desired by them, however, that oftener they have toppled over and turned their infantile legs entreatingly upward; but I have conquered; they live."

"Wal, neow," said Captain Leezur, my chiefest admirer, "ef you ain't a case to describe anything in natur'! Ef I had you areound I shouldn't never want no dagarrier of a sick chicken, for you'd call 'em right up afore me!"

I murmured my low thanks, blushing as usual under flattery.

Vesty was talking brilliantly with some of the company, quite away from me. She had a bright, disdainful look, when I chanced to glance that way, new to her, but quite befitting—ah me! ah me!—some lady one might dream of, of high, disdainful quality.

"Ain't he a case neow to describe anything in natur'?" joyfully reiterated Captain Leezur to Uncle Coffin.

Uncle Coffin, with his hands on his knees, shook his head at me, finding no words quite to the mark.

"Dodrabbit ye!" said he; "you sly young dog, you!"

"That 's what I tell him!" rippled the deep-gurgling brook of Captain Leezur's voice; "we're jest like nateral twin-brothers. Only," he added tenderly and gravely, "he ain't nigh so ongodly as I use' ter be."

"Ongodly! Why, dodrabbit ye, Leezur!" said

this native Artichoke, "ye never done an ongodly thing in yer life—'cept, maybe," he added, "to cuss a little when ye was fishin' for the bucket."

"'Specially," said Captain Leezur intelligently, "when the women folks has been thar afore ye, r'ilin' the water and jabbin' of her furder deown."

Uncle Coffin gave me an irresistible but a loving and true, not a malicious, wink.

"Speakin' o' women folks, Leezur," said he, "is there any news from Lot's wife?"

Captain Leezur cleared the mellow symphonies of those organs through which he intoned his speech; and was about to reply, fully and sweetly, when Captain Pharo made his appearance at the door.

Uncle Coffin sprang from his chair, and with a grave face, which only later broke out into those beams of affection which were storming his bosom, shook him violently by the collar, dragged him across the floor, and set him in a chair by the fireplace with a loud, conclusive thump.

"Dodrabbit ye, man!" said he, "I hain't heered your voice since I was a baby."

Captain Pharo, with a countenance full of delight and sympathy, pulled his ruffled jacket down nearer to the waist line, and lit his pipe.

"Dodrabbit ye, Pharo!" continued Uncle Coffin, and turned from his pet to me with another wink, "what are yer days like now? They ain't like the grass, are they? I b'lieve they are, jest like the same old grass, or like the morning flower, the blighting wind sweeps o'er. She withers in an'—

why don't ye never finish on 'er out, Pharo? Why don't ye never ring the last note on 'er—eh?"

"Because, Coffin," said Captain Pharo, with a smile of deep meaning, "because thar 's so many things that when they're onct finished they 're completely done for in this world; eat a meal o' vittles and thar 's the end on't; smoke a pipe an' she runs dead; I like t' have one thing left over. I like to feel, Coffin, by clam! 't thar 's somethin' 't thar ain't go'n' to be no end on!"

Uncle Coffin had been studying him attentively, with his hands on his knees.

"Kobbe," said he, "you're a philosoffarer."

Captain Pharo wiggled uneasily.

"I don't say hippopotamar nor rhinosossarer," said Uncle Coffin; "I say philosoffarer."

Captain Pharo drew a strange breath of relief.

"Mebbe we're a little alike in that respec'," Captain Leezur assured him deliciously; "'cept 't he ain't nigh so ongodly as I use' ter be."

"I don' know," said Captain Pharo. "I have worked sometimes, Sundays—poo! poo! hohum!—but not 'less 'twas somethin' 'mportant, gettin' in hay or somethin' like that. And I have—poo! poo! hohum! Wal, wal—hauled out my lobster car sometimes Sundays waitin' for the smack—hohum!"

"Pharo," said Uncle Coffin, holding up his finger, "no more! I know ye. Thar ain't an ongodly bone in yer body—'cept maybe when ye've lost yer pipe an' cussed a little."

"An' the women folks wants to haul ye over some-

whar's on a flat sea to have yer gol darn pictur' took!" said Captain Pharo, with poignant recollection of a still unquiet grief.

"Kobbe," said Uncle Coffin, "no more!"

> "'I know not why I love her,
> The fair an' beau'chus she;
> She bro't the cuss upon me,
> Und'neath the apple-tree:
> But she asked me for my jack knife,
> And halved 'er squar' with me,
> Sence all'as lovely woman
> Gives the biggest half to thee.'"

"Judah's wife writ that," exclaimed Captain Pharo, with a generic awe of poetry as poetry.

"She did," said Uncle Coffin, with eyes appreciative of the muse fixed gravely on the fire, "she did."

There was a daughter of Eve who was treating me very severely.

Instead of the old encouraging smile and gleam of merry recognition or sympathy in her eyes, there was now an averted gaze, bent very brightly, it seemed, on every one but me; in that direction alone, a studied coldness, a haughty carriage of the head. What could I expect?—but it broke my heart.

I subscribed silently to the mood of Belle O'Neill, whose mind was subject to vagaries, and who in the midst of the gay company was playing weird, plaintive "revival" tunes upon the mouth-harp, enthusiastically absorbed in her art.

Her mistress, Miss Pray, who notably for some

time had been receiving the attentions of Pershal, the man who had been in California, had withdrawn with him, with tacit understanding of apologies, to the kitchen, where they were carrying on their courting, as all good Basins should, undisturbed.

The young people were playing a game of forfeits. I heard Vesty's penalty pronounced; it was, to go and put her hand upon "the handsomest man in the room."

She began to move, with her lovely, erect head and brilliant, averted smile, toward the fireplace. Surely she would not put any ignominy or mockery upon me—ah, no! I knew in my heart. But she came nearer, and I gazed, spellbound; and then she bowed her beautiful head with a tender, laughing smile, and laid her hand on Captain Leezur's shoulder.

"Here!" she said.

Oh, how he laughed! Robins by the brook, and sun-sparkles.

"That 's right, Vesty!" he exclaimed; "that 's right, darlin'. Come and kile yourself areound them 't 's got some feelin's!"

He winked at Captain Pharo and Uncle Coffin.

The sweet girl blushed disdainfully—for some one—and, with a lingering touch on the dear man's shoulder, went away.

"I've all'as been kiled over a good deal," explained Captain Leezur gently, with a smile the subtlety of which he sought in a measure to hide.

"And we mustn't forgit," he added, "that thar 's

a time for all things under the sun. Thar 's a time to be a bean-pole and thar 's a time to kile."

He winked at me; fearing that I had not understood, he winked still broader; then, moving his back toward his two companions, he directed full upon me a wink so vast and expressive that I endeavored at once to signify my enlightenment by replying in kind; but, unpractised as I was in the art, I could only infer what the unlovely aspect of my features must have been from the look of sorrowful disgust which immediately thereafter overspread Vesty's own.

But it transpired that that look of disgust was not for me. It was for Belle O'Neill, who, moved by another inspiration, had thoughtfully abandoned her mouth-harp to creep through the surreptitious channel of the wood-box and learn how Miss Pray and Pershal were progressing in their courting.

She returned with a face of excitement.

"Be they j'indin' hands, or anything like that?" we asked.

"No," said Belle O'Neill: "he told 'er winter pears was the pears for him, an' she giv' him a slap an' started down suller to get a dish o' fruit, an' he told 'er when she come back he was goin' ter tell her a story 't he hadn't never told or dreamed o' tellin' to anybody but her; he said he'd all'as kep' it to himself, 'cause folks 't hadn't been in Californy was ign'runt an' env'ous, an' wouldn't believe nothin' 't was told 'em, but he guessed she loved him

well enough to b'lieve it; an' he said the name of it was 'The Story o' the Sacred Cow!'"

On uttering these words with a countenance of feverish eagerness and expectation, Belle O'Neill unhesitatingly turned and crept back through the passage.

Not long afterward I found myself lifted bodily over into the wood-box, and guided by the silent wake of Captain Pharo's pipe before, and entreated gently by Uncle Coffin from behind, I crawled to the little store-room adjoining the kitchen.

The door was slightly ajar; and with whatever shame I have only to record that I stood with delectation by this door and waited for the Man-Who-had-Been-in-California to tell "The Story of the Sacred Cow."

"Arter all, Jane," said he, plunging his knife into a choice pear, "you'd orter seen the winter fruit we use' ter have in Californy!"

Miss Pray's face fell. We heard Captain Pharo groan silently; moreover, his pipe had gone out, and he dared not relight it.

"I thought you was goin' to tell a new one—about the Sacred Cow?" said Miss Pray.

"So I will, Jane," said Pershal; "but the fact is, it 's sech a true, sech a solemn an' myster'ous thing, that I fa'rly dread to tackle it!"

Belle O'Neill would have gasped, had she dared. She kicked the calf of my lame leg convulsively instead.

"Thar 's been a great many stories," continued Pershal, "about sacred cows. Folks has claimed t' seen 'em. Circuses has claimed t' had 'em: but the fact, an' the solemn fact, is, thar wa'n't never but one Sacred Cow, and that was raised on my farm in Californy.

"She was white, and nothin' monst'ous, jest about the size of an ordinary cow"—Captain Pharo drew an inaudible sigh of relief—"it was the intellex of her and the sacredness; wal, the go-to-meet'n-ness of her, as ye might say, that was so monst'ous an' so strange that I trem'le to call it up ag'in; but I've promised, an' I will."

Belle O'Neill, pale in the darkness, stifled another gasp.

"She wa'n't nothin' byordinar' as a calf; run an' gambil around with the other calves, bunt everythin', an' shake her heels out with the sinfullest. It was when she got to be a cow, and a old cow, that these here ructions o' sacredness, as ye might say, begun to develop themselves in her.

"First I knew, she wouldn't eat nothin': we warmed her mess an' we salted it; no, nothin' 'u'd do. We tried all manner o' gimcracks an' fussin' with her. Finally says Jim—my man—says he: 'Perhaps she's the Sacred Cow,' says he, laffin', an' went in an' got a hymn-book an' sot it up afore her, and"—Belle 'ONeill shivered—"what does the old cow do but pitch in and eat her mess regalar! Minit we took that hymn-book away or shet it up, she'd stop eatin'."

Captain Pharo and Uncle Coffin nudged each other in voiceless agony. I felt, but could not see, the calm irradiance of Captain Leezur's look.

"Then another singalar thing begun to be noticed. All them 't drunk the milk from her was took an' possessed to jine the church! I use' ter send out peddlin' carts o' milk—for my ranch was the biggest in that section—it use' ter be all mixed together in course, an' the smallest elemunt o' that old cow's milk in it made it jest the same as ef 'twas all hern. Sometimes I thought ser'ously whether I hadn't ought to take her and go around an' start seasons o' special interest with her all over the kentry; and then thinks I—no, I'll stay here and I'll let 'em build new churches. So they kep' a-goin' up—three new Baptis', four new Methodis', in a month's time."

Captain Leezur was softly but strenuously sucking a nervine lozenge. I heard Captain Pharo crunching one down stormily, at the same time one was pressed into my hand. "They come high," whispered the beloved voice; "cent apiece, dollar a hunderd, but——"

"But the strangest and singalarest of it all, I didn't find out till 'long toward the last. I was a-milkin' on her one day, an' I spilled the milk accidental, an' I said a word that I hadn't ort'er said. When she heered that she up an' kicked me, an' I give her tail a yank, an' she began to sing——"

Belle O'Neill clutched me by the neck.

"I don' say that she sung as Vesty doos. I don' say that she pernounced the words jest regalar; but

as fur as tune goes, she hit the tune right squar' in the bull's eye every time. She sung:

"'From Greenlan's icy mountings,
From Injy's coral stran',
Whar Aferk's sunny fountings
Roll down their goldin' san';'"

And when she got as fur as that"—Pershall showed evidences of lively distress—"she keeled right over an' died.

"You've heered o' the tewn 't the old cow died on? Wal, that 's whar it all started, Jane; right thar. That was the very cow and the very event. It was *my* old cow that died."

"Give me sea-room here, by clam!" muttered Captain Pharo, shooting his arms about.

"Ef I b'lieved in gho's, I sh'd say 't your but'ry was harnted, Jane," came from the kitchen the solemn and shifty voice of the Man-Who-had-Been-in-California: "le's step around by the outside way to the door whar the folks is. Jest look at the stars, Jane," he continued, when they were safe out. "See anythin' o' my old cow up in the Milky Way? Down in the southern latitude, whar I was, the Milky Way use' ter be so plain some nights 't ye could see——"

We lost it in the distance, as we returned, by the honorable and legitimate highway now offered us, to the guest-room. "I never keered so much about money in the bank," said Uncle Coffin, giving me a nudge; "all 't I ever as't for was luck!"

But I yearned in secret to know the developments of the Milky Way; especially as the length of time

absorbed by Pershal and Miss Pray in walking between the two doors advised me with an only too tragic hint of the marvel and interest I had lost.

I could not wonder that Vesty was now loftier toward me than ever. Uncle Coffin, Captain Pharo, Captain Leezur and I kept close together as a sort of brazen and disgraceful community. Uncle Coffin, having to retrace his steps to Artichoke, was the first to leave the party.

"I can't tell ye, Miss Pray," said he, "how much I've enjiyed the evenin'—no, honest, I can't tell ye!"—he winked at Captain Pharo, who choked and had to resort to song—"but I und'stand thar 's a happy event comin', an' I wish ye jiy; ye know I do!"

As he disappeared down the road he indulged in a continued, loud, and exact imitation of Admiral 'S I Sums-it-up (who was also a justice of the peace, and who married people):

"G'long, ye old fool! Git up, ye old skate!"

At which we all, including Pershal and Miss Pray, laughed inordinately, gazing out into the sweet Basin night; and indeed I was even ready to avow with my life that it was a joke of the extremest savor. Even had all Uncle Coffin's sins been known, he would have been forgiven.

Captain Leezur put on Vesty's shawl for her:

"Sence I'm the han'somest man in the room," he gurgled.

"So you are!" The tender, girlish light of her great eyes was on him; no kind look for me.

"Vesty!" Captain Leezur whispered, but a whisper that could not be dark and secret to save itself; I heard: "why don't ye speak to major? Ye ain't spoke tew words tew him the hull endurin' evenin'."

She darted a dark flash at him too.

"Vesty! Vesty!" said the beloved old man, in that whisper that so thoroughly deceived him—"I know 't I set ye up to this bean-pole business. But it won't dew for both on ye to be bean-poles. One or the other on ye 's got to kile. Neow, Vesty, ye know 't major 's got some misfortin's in his looks 't makes him beound to be preoud; ye wouldn't have him other ways. Ye see, Vesty, he don't know 't——"

She stopped him with a haughty look.

"An' in course," said he, "I don't know, neither. But it dews make me feel dreadful t' think I've started sech a rank bean-pole farm as this, when I've all'as told ye, my little gal, 't we'd ort'er use moderation"—Captain Leezur wiped his blessed shining eyes—"moderation in all things, even in passnips—I have said—an' neow I change it to bean-poles."

Vesty's mouth quivered; her eyes looked fit to enfold the whole sinful world for his sake.

"Good-night, major!" she said coldly; but she had spoken. And, beautiful and tall, she passed out of sight.

As Captain Leezur turned to me, in spite of the dark duplicity of his conduct toward me, my heart gushed out to him unawares. I grasped his hand silently.

XXV

IN THE LANE

I MET her on the morrow in the lane. She would have passed me with a mere morning salutation, but I spoke to her. "I will tell the story at least," I thought, "before I go away."

"Vesty," said I timidly. Even the handsomest of the Basins were timid in putting the question; and I, so miserable, and believing it not to be a question at all, but only a confession, was choking.

"Yes, sir," said Vesty, with reassuring meekness, but there was something wicked about her mouth and eyes. O Vesty, had you been of the world I fear you would have been a sad one!

"What did you mean," said I, starting in wise Basin fashion, at a millennium distance from the intended point, "what did you mean, the other night, when you said that you wished I had a mother?"

"Oh, because we all need them, for comfort—and then, sometimes—for correction."

"And which did you think that I needed one for?"

Vesty turned her sheathed eyes away toward the safe west with a smile that gave me no other answer.

"It is lifting to be a glorious day," I said.

"If you want to talk about the weather," rippled the girl's voice, quite gently, "why don't you go and sit on the log with Captain Leezur? He rolled down another this morning."

"I am going," I sighed. "What do you think he would tell me about the weather?"

"What we all say: 'The wind's canting in from the west, and you'll see this fog hop.'"

"It is what I say, and shall say forever, in such a case. 'The wind's canting in from the west, and you'll see this fog hop.'"

"You only pretend to be a Basin!"

"God forgive you! No; I don't pretend. I shall never get over it. I shall be one forever and ever, wherever I go, Vesty."

She looked down and paled. "Are you going away, major?"

"Yes." Then said I, looking at her, "How far do you think pity could lead one, Vesty—you, so pitiful and kind? Do you think that it could even lead you—to marry me? To take little Gurd and go away with me—and help me to live—for pity?"

"No! oh, no!" she gasped.

"Then," said I, grasping hard on my cane with my feeble hand, "as God wills!"

"Because," said Vesty, "I'm not so unselfish as that. I can't marry you for that reason—because—I love **you**!"

The red of the Basin sunset, that would be by and by unsurpassed, glowed in her cheeks.

As for me—forever a Basin—I dashed my hand

across my eyes. A Voice above land and sea rolled toward me in that moment, through her voice, in gathering waves that covered all the pitiful accident and despair of a maimed, halting, birth-marked universe:

"And the crooked places shall be made straight; and the rough places plain. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart." . . .

XXVI

JUST THE SCHOOL-HOUSE

WAVES, slowly, softly breaking, not on the Basin shore: though ever, in remotest lands, we dream of that.

We hold it mystic more and more, for love of it! —ay, we have it mingled in our thoughts with that one safe and sweet possession, the Land unspoken, the Basin whose colors dawn at eventide!

And we never count: "Such an one was lost," and, "Such an one was living, when we knew." For there, there are none lost. They live again!

I suggested once that we should build a house fitting those grand sea-cliffs, sometimes to occupy it.

But Vesty, ever wise, was silent, troubled, and I read her thought.

No, we should introduce no discordant element there, of liveries and servants, and riches and seclusive walls, of *mine* and *thine*.

"Mine *is* thine if thou needest it," was ever the Basin code: "even my life!" Before such a spirit the admission of worldly wealth and rank were tawdry.

But Vesty communicates with them (dear to me

when they arrive are the stamps unutterably erased by Lunette's faithful art): and we know that they are happier for us, and by us comforted.

And do I never blush for Vesty in her new position? Ay, a thousand times, for pride and joy! Her manners are from a high source indeed; you will not find me any that are higher.

Full are her hands of charity and mercy, given, as the great Founder of our nobilities gave, without stooping, of condescension. Saint Vesta! who gives a glory to my name it never had before—the high and noble lady of my house!

And love makes, as fully as may be in this world, security about her steps, which yet it would not hamper.

Driven in her state carriage, robed in velvet and sable, she is royal; yet not so queenly, not so matchless, as when walking, pitiful, lonely, and strong against misfortune, by the Basin shores, with her child upheld upon her arm, and the old shawl.

One evening I found her by the window, gazing out wistfully where the wind was tossing the rain, which ceased now and then in strange intermittent gusts, still wild of the tempest.

She looked up at me with a smile, trustful, but earnest and pathetic.

"I want to go out in the storm," she said.

"Then go, child," I answered her. "Your possessions are wide, and, as we of the Basin say, you are not made of sugar, to melt; neither," I added, "are you like Lot's wife."

She showed her fine teeth over that old tender and beloved reminiscence, but the wistful look, and sad, was still in her eyes.

"And—I would like to put on the old shawl again, just this once," she said.

"Oh," said I, "that is another thing. That is priceless, and I have it, as you know, locked among my treasures. Still, this once, yes." And I brought it to her.

Still smiling at me, as pleading for her fancy, she held it at her throat as of old.

I made haste to resume my reading with seeming preoccupation apart, for I thought she wished to go alone.

"Aren't you coming?" said she, wistfully again, and paled and turned to me.

The look in her eyes—she wanted me! Oh, how my heart leaped—a trick taught it at the Basin, which now it will never get over.

But, sly as Captain Leezur, I hid my delight in the folds of my great overcoat.

Long we walked together. "What inspired you to this? This is best of all," I said.

"Why?" said Vesty, glowing and beautiful.

"Because now I see again that you are 'Vesty.' And my Lady of M—— was a possible dream always. But Vesty seemed unattainable.

"That rose color," I added, looking at her cheeks, "I never saw anywhere except at certain sunsets—you know where."

For we of the Basin—however wilfully inclined

sometimes, as Captain Pharo—at heart bow down to our wives, and make love to them, long, long after we are married: quite, indeed, until death do us part, as all true Basins should.

"Paul!" said Vesty. Now "Paul" was really my name, with considerable before and after it, but never mind all that.

"Paul!"

"Well?" I said

Confused with the rose-color blushes: "I forgot," she murmured, "what I was going to say."

No, she had not forgotten it! Her face was eloquent; only she cannot talk with that fluency with which she can look beautiful and sigh. Especially when she would express anything of deep feeling, she has a way of brushing a speck of dust from my right shoulder, and letting her hand rest there a moment, that tells me worlds, but would not go for much, I admit, on a smart female rostrum.

But "Paul!" that voice creeps to me at all times, for counsel, for sympathy; comes impulsively, that is the best of it—comes ever impulsively. I do not know why I am so blessed among my fellows! Just as the lad comes to me—he, too, of the highest breeding. I never saw a look of wonder or shrinking on his face; and once, in an illness that he had he clung to me, cried for me, even above his mother.

I gave my heart to him then. When a sick child, with a mother like Vesty, turns and clings to one—well, it is like to set one up.

He quotes me, refers to me, defends me, apes all

my mannerisms, and struts with them proudly as clear legal type and documentary evidence.

He has my name, Gurdon "Paul," with the rest: he is my heir. Handsome, stalwart, as our race has notably been; loving, generous, fearless, all that the world can give him will be his besides; tutors, splendors, wide, luxurious travel, the entrance to glittering courts—only, God grant that he may find just the Basin at last!—the true, the pitiful, the pure of heart: that he may come up to the stature of his father, who knew but one plain path, and that the royal one; who, in the battle with fear and death, was greater than the storm.

So, often in rich and high cathedrals with Vesty by my side, the organ has but to peal forth plaintively, and those stately, emblematic windows fade away to others, broken, swaying in the wind, and the roar of the tides comes in, and high above the great clouds pass wondrously.

And I think how the Christ, painted in purple and crimson glories in these walls, and before whose image the hosts bow down, was a poor Basin of the Basins, in His birth and in His death; who had never a sure pillow, and who minded all woes save His own.

And above the written scroll of the preacher I hear the old prophetic voice, how "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." . . .

Vesty walks this new way with me, that was not of her knowledge or choosing, with a patience in any

tedious form or imposed convention, far surpassing mine.

Then I tell her that I am only an adopted Basin, and have missed so many of the first important years of good breeding; when I was taught to be only moody, if I would, and solitary and selfish.

Then she turns the rose-color, and her eyes shine on me; and if I have been patient with some vapid visitor, uttering weary commonplaces (longing, oh how infinitely, all the while in my heart, for Captain Leezur and the log!) she comes to me afterward, and leans over me with a caress and says, "That 's a dear Basin!"

Thus I observe always my lady's rank, and am happy when she exalts me to it.

Sometimes in dark hours, when gigantic shadows, unexplained, oppress heart and soul——lo! the "Boys" play softly to us once again upon instruments above our art, with a touch that thrills above these masters.

We recognize that life is not a draught, either of joy or misery, but a sweet, stern task set us, in a failing tenement; and half between smiles and tears we dream how, to that darkening school-house, when the shadows grow heartbroken and weary, some loving Basin, only great because of the faith that was in him, shall come to lead us home.

THE END

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